

Brill's Companion to the Reception of Socrates

Brill's Companion to Classical Reception

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Brill's Companion to the Reception of Socrates

Edited by

Christopher Moore



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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Moore, Christopher, 1981– editor.

Title: Brill's companion to the reception of Socrates / edited by Christopher Moore.

Description: Leiden ; Boston : Brill, [2019] | Series: Brill's companion to classical reception, ISSN 2213-1426 ; volume 18

Identifiers: LCCN 2019008324 (print) | LCCN 2019010873 (ebook) | ISBN 9789004396753 (ebook) | ISBN 9789004396746 (hardback : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Socrates.

Classification: LCC B317 (ebook) | LCC B317 .B6955 2019 (print) | DDC 183/.2—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2019008324>

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 2213-1426

ISBN 978-90-04-39674-6 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-39675-3 (e-book)

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This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

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Abbreviations

DK	Diels, H. and W. Kranz, <i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> . Berlin ⁶ 1952
DL	Diogenes Laertius
PCG	Kassel, R. and C. Austin, <i>Poetai Comici Graeci</i> . Berlin 1983–91
SSR	Giannantoni, G., <i>Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquiae</i> . Naples 1990
TGF	Snell, B., R. Kannicht, and S. Radt, <i>Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta</i> . Göttingen 1971–2004

Other ancient abbreviations from the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Oxford ⁴2012

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Socrates' Writing as Writings about Socrates

Christopher Moore

In Lawrence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1761), we learn that the narrator's father has written a *Life of Socrates*. His version has a life-denying protagonist:

My father, I say, had a way, when things went extremely wrong with him, especially upon the first sally of his impatience,—of wondering why he was begot,—wishing himself dead;—sometimes worse:—And when the provocation ran high, and grief touched his lips with more than ordinary powers—Sir, you scarce could have distinguished him from Socrates himself.

Tristram Shandy 3.13

Walter Shandy has frequent occasion to quote his epitome of Socrates' 399 BCE defense speech, concerning the charms of death. When Tristram summarizes that epitome, he finds it difficult to restrict himself to Socrates' views: he blends them with *Hamlet's* ruminations on suicide and then with certain haut-ascetic Brahmanic views from late fourth-century BCE India.¹

We wonder why the father writes a *Life of Socrates*: what problem in mid-eighteenth-century leisured England does it show him intending to solve? And what does Sterne mean to do by including this detail in the novel, with the attention to Socrates' purported death-tendency and the ease with which one might conflate his views with exotic and foreign Cynical intellectual practices? Answering these questions would involve looking to the popularity of *Lives of Socrates* from before the time of Walter Shandy's implied youth. They praised and posited as familiar Socrates' "heroic virtue," "invincible heart," and "incorruptible justice," wondering indeed "whether Athens were more to be honored for the birth of Socrates, or branded with infamy and hatred for

1 The latter views, known to modern Europe through Strabo, traveled first through Onesicritus, Alexander the Great's intellectual attaché—Onesicritus had been asked by a leading Brahman, Mandanis, about Greece's leading philosophers, and on listing Socrates, Pythagoras, and Diogenes of Sinope, learned that for all their disdain for convention, they hardly went far enough toward nature (*Geography* 15.65).

the cruel murder of him.”² Walter Shandy’s literary impulse, and that of his compatriots, has not, of course, waned; even popular bookstores stock new biographies of Socrates.³ And while Socrates’ contrary views about life and living represent only one feature of his complex character, they retain their salience.

Similar questions arise for another great novel, Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*. In the fourth volume (1922), Dr. Cottard praises and disparages Socrates in a single rant:

The wise man is of necessity a skeptic ... What do I know? ‘*Gnothi seauton*,’ said Socrates. That’s very true, excess in anything is a fault. But I’m flabbergasted when I reflect that that was enough for the name of Socrates to have endured until our own day. What is there in that philosophy? Little enough, when all’s said and done. When you reflect that Charcot and others have done work a thousand times more remarkable and which at least rests on something, on the suppression of the pupillary reflex as a syndrome of general paralysis, and that they’re almost forgotten! When all’s said and done, Socrates isn’t so extraordinary. They’re people who

2 Citing from *Plato his Apology of Socrates and Phaedo or Dialogue concerning the Immortality of Mans Soul, and Manner of Socrates his Death: Carefully translated from the Greek and Illustrated by Reflections upon both the Athenian Laws, and ancient Rites and Traditions concerning the Soul, Therein mentioned* (London: T.R. & N.T. for James Magnes and Richard Bentley, 1675; translator inferred to be William Charleton); similarly, Samuel Catherall’s *Εἰκὼν Σωκράτουςῃ. Or, a Portraiture of Socrates, Extracted out of Plato. In Blank Verse* (London: printed by L. Lichfield, for A. Peifley, 1717); or E. Bysshe’s *The Memorable Things of Socrates, Written by Xenophon. In Five Books. Translated into English. To which are prefixed the Life of Socrates, From the French of Monsieur Charpentier, A Member of the French Academy. And the Life of Xenophon, Collected from several Authors; with some Account of his Writings* (Dublin: by George Faulkner, 1747); or, John Gilbert Cooper’s *The Life of Socrates: Collected from the Memorabilia of Xenophon and the Dialogues of Plato, and illustrated farther by Aristotle, Diodorus Siculus, Cicero, Proclus, Apuleius, Maximus Tyrius, Boethius, Diogenes Laertius, Aulus Gellius, and others. In which The Doctrine of that Philosopher and the Academic Sect are vindicated from the Misrepresentations of Aristophanes, Aristoxenus, Lucian, Plutarch, Athenaeus, Suidas and Lactantius; the Origin, Progress and Design of Pagan Theology, Mythology, and Mysteries, explain’d; Natural Religion defended from Atheism on one hand. and Superstition on the other, and the destructive Tendency of both to Society demonstrated; Moral and Natural Beauty analogously compar’d; and the present Happiness of Mankind shewn to consist in, and the future to be acquir’d by, Virtue only derived from the true Knowledge of God. Herein the different Sentiments of La Mothe Le Vayer, Cudworth, Stanley, Dacier, Charpentier, Voltaire, Rollin, Warburton, and others on these Subjects, are occasionally consider’d* (London, printed for R. Dodsley, 3rd ed. 1750 [1st ed. 1749]).

3 In English, most recently Hughes 2010 and Johnson 2011; but also regularly available are Waterfield 2009 and Taylor 2000, and even Stone 1988 and maybe Colaiaco 2001.

had nothing to do, who spent their whole day walking about chopping logic. It's like Jesus Christ: '*Love one another*,' how very pretty.... Still, I acknowledge that Socrates and the others, they're necessary for a superior culture, to get a gift for exposition. I always quote the *gnothi seauton* to my pupils at the first lecture. Old Bouchard, who found that out, congratulated me.

Sodome et Gomorrhe, Part 2, Ch. 3, tr. Sturrock

Cottard chafes at Socrates' maxim earning him two-and-a-half millennia of fame, a maxim that mere leisure and disputatiousness could produce, and that yields at best only an indeterminate effect on the soul, whereas the decades of careful researches that yielded medically substantial treatments of the mind and body have no such commonplace currency. But he also recognizes the cultural importance of Socrates' maxim, and has absorbed the norm of its continued dissemination. So then we can ask, again, what's going on in fin-de-siècle France such that Socrates is the best representative of a vague humanism against a rigorous science, one that is reduced to—for Proust, obviously the leading desideratum—self-knowledge?⁴ The tight linkage to Jesus' maxim raises its own questions, about a naïve merging of Pagan philosophy and Christian morality from the perspective of a Parisian academic.

Answers to these questions about Sterne and Proust, novelists with strong philosophical bents, require broadly historicist inquiry. This means learning what their compatriots, and especially authors of the books they read in school and thereafter, knew and thought about Socrates. This involves knowing both the sources on Socrates generally available and the breadth and texture of ideological or intellectual work those sources had been put to. That might be called the objective side of the inquiry—how Socrates came to our authors in their culture. The subjective side of the inquiry amounts to discerning, by the way they put to use the Socrates available to them, something about their own thinking of the world. This includes their insights into latent or forgotten traits of Socrates' character and philosophical principles. But we cannot infer details of their mentality if we do not already understand much about Socrates as he had been and could have been interpreted, argumentatively deployed, and identified with or against.

• • •

4 It might be worth noting that Socrates is mentioned twice in Part I of the volume, in the theory of "inversion."

This Introduction began with reference to two novels to show the pervasiveness and vitality of Socratic reception even at a great distance from the Classical era or the scholarship of ancient philosophy. So pervasive, alas, that this *Companion* could hardly canvass the most significant loci of such reception, especially not in literature and art.⁵ To constrain the scope, and to focus on the most fecund instances of such reception, this volume attends mainly to philosophical authors, individuals principally but also some schools and movements. The exceptions are for some non-philosophical authors or groups of authors closely related to philosophy. As it happens, novelists like Sterne and Proust were reading philosophers and the history of philosophy—the young Proust named his literary journal after Plato's *Symposium* [*Le Banquet*, 1892–93]—and so this study, with present and future studies like it, undergirds any successful research into the reception of Socrates even in non-philosophical genres.

To articulate what was implied above, the reception of a philosopher means, instead of analyzing the philosopher's views or telling the philosopher's life in some unmediated way, studying other thinkers' analyses of his or her philosophical and biographical meaning. In reception we turn our focus on the receivers rather than the received. Yet if the focus blurs the background it does not block it. Reception studies is motivated by an assumption of transparency: the study of a philosopher requires study of his or her objects of interest. For example, making sense of Nietzsche includes making sense of his study of Socrates, which includes making sense of Socrates. Studying reception requires looking two directions at once, both at and over the shoulder of one's target of interest.

Philosophical reception—the reception of a philosopher by a philosopher—requires doing philosophy. In the case of Socrates, it takes reconstructing and evaluating the arguments, self-descriptions, and deliberate intimations attributable to him, and reconstructing and evaluating the same found in the later author (e.g., Nietzsche) relevant to understanding and contextualizing that later author's discussion of him. It also requires intellectual and bibliographical history, genre analysis, and acuity about the authors' rhetorical goals. These are not merely the accumulation of trivia. They help us judge whether Socrates and/or his “receiver” are right about the best way to live, or whatever else the local goal of philosophizing might be. And our own reception of Socrates is mediated by our predecessors', so reception studies is a pursuit of self-understanding. The value of philosophical reception might already have a Socratic tinge: it assumes, first, that doing philosophy by ourselves, without help

5 See, for example, Wilson 2007; Puchner 2010; entries in Nails 2018, “Supplement.”

from other philosophers (i.e., in history), is relatively unpromising, and second, that studying a historical figure in philosophy by ourselves, without help from other philosophers, is also relatively unpromising, and so, third, that we might have the best chance to succeed if we follow the best philosophers studying the best philosophers. Of course, this does not devolve work from ourselves; we still have to do the philosophy on and with these two philosophers. By studying, say, Nietzsche on Socrates, we have a chance, at once, to learn more about Nietzsche (by seeing what choices he makes in his limning of Socrates) and more about Socrates (by seeing what Nietzsche sees in him that we might not yet have seen, or appreciated). We want to learn more about Nietzsche and about Socrates just because we think they may be fruitful guides for our own philosophical endeavors.

In reception studies, the “receivers”—the topics of the chapters in this volume—are no longer mere “sources” or “interpretations” from which we glean information or lore about Socrates not known elsewhere or, for the sake of dialectical completeness, populate the field of logically possible or historically actual readings of Socrates. Source-criticism is part of reception studies, but it has a different goal. We are less concerned to distinguish reliable from unreliable channels of precise information, and thereby to establish the original text or person, which is what *Quellenforschung* seeks, than to know what a person could believe and know about Socrates and what others similarly situated would for their own part come to believe and know. Historiography of Socratic interpretation is also part of reception studies, but it too has a different goal. How scholars and others have studied and written about Socrates is worth charting, as we seek self-knowledge of our own discipline and its history; but, for the most part, in reception studies we target only certain individual interpretations. To be sure, we cannot divorce reception from historiography, because to judge the selectivity, aptness, and density of some latter-day author's picture of Socrates involves having set a contemporaneous baseline. But, again, the focus differs. In philosophy, reception means doing philosophy with more people. That is, if philosophy amounts to a conversation—one that goes better not when solutions are found but when more mutual and self-understanding is attained, and the methods for such understanding are refined and transferrable to new participants—then reception studies is part of philosophy in its broadening the conversation as widely as possible.

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Socrates seems to represent a certain limit case for reception studies. Since Socrates wrote nothing, it seems that *every* study of him must count as a study

of his reception. There seems to be no study of Socrates *himself*.⁶ We seem to have no access to his thoughts as he would choose to have articulated them, as we do in the published works, no matter how rhetorically indirect, of Plato or Montaigne or Nietzsche. Not only does this suggest a “pure” reception; it suggests as well an “empty” reception, since, in perhaps every case, authors are receiving not Socrates but other receptions of Socrates; not even the earliest had writings on which to ground his interpretation.

This suggestion is not quite right. It overplays the importance of writing for evincing a person's views. In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates says that he asks questions, and anyone who wishes to answer them may thereby hear what he has to say (33a7–b4).⁷ Might Socrates have manifested his views not in writing but in the way he talked to other people—perhaps even a way of talking that showed the way to writing about Socrates' conversations themselves? The evidence from the Platonic dialogues suggests that a regular part of Socrates' conversational practice—might we say, his philosophical teaching?—was retelling earlier conversations in which he took part, perhaps leaving it up to his audience to infer why he told them the conversation, or why he said what he did in the conversation itself. Beyond that, might Socrates have “written on the souls” of his associates, such that Plato and Antisthenes and Xenophon—and/or their writings—fairly count as Socrates' articulated expressions of his views? Just as a text is constituted by an author's writing on the page, a person is constituted by a teacher's having conversations with him or her.⁸ By writing Socratic conversations, might Plato and the rest have answered his questions, thus allowing us to hear what he has to say? No doubt Plato and Antisthenes and Xenophon are their own people, with their own ideas and goals that condition, limit, bend Socrates' message. But might that not be his message *too*? Anyway, a person's writing is always conditioned, limited, and bent by his or her cultural context, the language and salient concepts and available contrasts and effective dialectical maneuvers. So, no doubt, Socratic reception is strange. But that is because Socratic philosophy is strange. It is practiced in an unusual medium. Reception can deal with it, because later authors can recognize, theorize, and judge Socrates' unwritten conversations.

This volume aims to be a resource for doing philosophy with Socrates. A resource, not *the* resource. This project began in the desire to have

6 This may be an exaggeration, as Wolfsdorf 2017 shows, arguing for a certain core of claims about or commitments in Socrates' ethical outlook that seem invariant across all testimonia.

7 For all the Platonic dialogues bearing this out, see Peterson 2011.

8 As Elias says in his *Introduction to Philosophy*, speaking of a Pythagoras who did not write, “what writings are to others, his students are to him” (10,15).

effectively an encyclopedia of Socrates in the history of philosophy. Practical considerations limited it to a single volume of long research articles. I solicited chapters on philosophers or groups of thinkers from people whom I believed would bring a new perspective or on topics on which there were no readily accessible resources. But I had to restrict in some ways. I implicitly depended on readers filling in gaps with chapters from a recent Brill volume, for which I was co-editor, *Socrates and the Socratic Dialogue* (2018). That volume combined source-criticism with reception studies; but in any event only up to Plotinus. Recent collections edited by Michael Trapp (2007, 2 vol.) and by Sara Ahbel-Rappe and Rachana Kamtekar (2006) fill in further gaps, for example on Socrates in Sextus Empiricus, Jewish thought, Voltaire, phenomenology, and psychoanalysis.

Brill's Companion to the Reception of Socrates provides just one instrument in the study of Socrates. The recent nine-volume Loeb Classical Library collection of the fragments of the *Early Greek Philosophers* (Laks and Most 2016, 8.293–411) includes testimonia about Socrates in volume 8, among the Sophists, relying almost exclusively on the writings of Aristophanes, Plato, and Xenophon (though with a smattering of Aristotle and Cicero). From that material the editors settle on about a dozen traits: a primary (or exclusive) interest in ethics; the search for definition; irony, a habit of non-answering, and self-ascription of ignorance; conscious conversational norms; *epagôgê* (“induction”); refutation; the concern to know and care for oneself; the equation of virtue and knowledge; curiosity about the teachability of virtue; belief in the unity of virtue; assertion of involuntariness of evil-doing and the impossibility of *akrasia* (“incontinence”); an absolute prohibition on doing injustice; and a subtle political skepticism. Three recent *Socratica* volumes collect ongoing research, from a range of disciplinary approaches, into the Socratic period and movement.⁹ The *Bloomsbury Companion to Socrates* (Bussanich and Smith 2012) assembles various guides to recent analytic scholarship on philosophical issues related to Socrates. Another recent companion, from Cambridge University Press (Morrison 2011), tries to balance the goals of the two previously mentioned volumes, in tight compass. The present volume aims, in contrast with these others, to provide something like an uninterrupted account of mostly philosophical reception of Socrates across 2450 years. Neither comprehensive nor exhaustive, of course, but a taste of the intellectual approaches to Socrates and Socratic material from most of the centuries past.

9 Rossetti and Stavru 2008; Rossetti and Stavru 2010; De Luise and Stavru 2013.

1 Living Reception

Many good philosophers were written about while they were alive; but for the earliest philosophers, we generally lack evidence of contemporary commentary.¹⁰ Thankfully, Socrates lived in an era whose works became extremely popular to quote in ensuing centuries. From the Late-Antique biographer of philosophy, Diogenes Laertius, we know that Ion of Chios, a fifth-century BCE belletrist and playwright, noted Socrates' travel to Samos with Archelaus, who was probably an erstwhile teacher of his.¹¹ Diogenes Laertius also has sources who attribute to a shoemaker named Simon sketches or memoranda of conversations he or his clients had with Socrates (2.122–4). As with most literature from the fifth century, we lack the slightest fragment of Simon's; but the possibility that he did write is guaranteed by the proliferation of written Socratic conversations in the decades around Socrates' execution and, more forcefully, by the number of plays, produced at large-scale Athenian festivals from the 420s, that featured or at least mentioned Socrates. Uncertainty remains about the source of Socrates' popularity: perhaps it was his unusual and famous valor in war; perhaps his connections with Pericles' circle, Critias and his family, or Alcibiades put him on the celebrity pages; perhaps he simply had a major intellectual profile, approaching that of Damon, Anaxagoras, and Protagoras; or perhaps he really did haunt the marketplace, hassling those most reputed for wisdom. Whichever it was, Socrates seems to have gotten his fellow Athenians talking, and writing.

Actually, many stories have Socrates talking to tragic dramatists. Early Greek anecdotes recall Socrates' influence on Euripides, an influence noted as early as their contemporary Aristophanes. Plato's *Symposium* depicts a close connection with Agathon. Their work, as well as that of Sophocles and the Aeschylean author of *Prometheus Bound*, seems to exhibit idiosyncratic views of *erôs*, and certainly all those who knew Socrates personally attributed to him a prominent set of reflections about *erôs*. Jacques Bromberg ("Greek Tragedy and the Socratic Tradition") reviews the evidence and conjectures several likely instances of tragic reception of Socrates, deploying not a better insight into the historical characteristics of Socrates but a more thorough sense of the character-traits attributed to "Socrates," for example shoelessness and an un-Sophistic poverty. In the process, this volume-opening chapter outlines the basic problems of Socratic reception, drawing instructive parallels to the

10 The earliest such commentary concerns Pythagoras (Xenophanes fr. 7 DK, Heraclitus fr. 40, 81, 129 DK) and Xenophanes (Heraclitus fr. 40 DK).

11 DL 2.23; see Graham 2008 with Woodbury 1971.

Homeric problem, where already an author has been posited as explanation for a variety of textual and performance effects. For Bromberg, we should feel comfortable looking for Socrates in fifth-century intellectual culture, both informed by and informing it, and we should seek to revisit the extant tragic plays and fragments thinking about those by whom they are influenced or to whose influence they are responding. The chapter prompts two more general questions about the magnitude of Socrates' influence on contemporary Athenian (intellectual) culture. First, were even the first-generation Socratics—Plato, Xenophon, Antisthenes, etc.—taking up an “idea” of Socrates assembled since the 420s on the dramatic stage and in conversations thereafter, such that even for them we cannot really resolve who was “more true to Socrates himself”? Second, could the import of Socrates' influence on his contemporaries have matched that of the tragedians—whose influence Aristophanes' *Frogs* asserts, in the process vaunting Socrates' too—or of the city leadership's closest intellectual advisors—e.g., Damon, Anaxagoras, Protagoras—such that the study of Athens could be, in however an indeterminate form, a study of the cultural reception of Socrates?¹²

Indeed, we do learn something about Athens and Socrates from the fact that the former accused, convicted, and executed the latter for undue influence on the young; we would learn even more were it true that Athens soon expressed remorse for its decision, perhaps enough to condemn Meletus and exile Anytus (DL 2.43), but not so soon as to convince some of Socrates' friends (Plato included) not to flee to Euclides' place in Megara (DL 3.6, 2.106). But the best early locations for “political” reception are the early fourth-century politically active prose authors: Polycrates, Lysias, Isocrates, and the author of the “Against Alcibiades” attributed to Andocides (conjectured to be Aeschines of Sphettus, a student of Socrates'). All might be considered orators or rhetoricians, and each wrote about Socrates for a speech-hungry audience. Exactly what that audience may have been, *David J. Murphy* (“Socrates in Early Fourth-Century Rhetoric”) sets out to determine, starting with the observation that their Socrates appears in “fictive” show-addresses rather than in politically exigent deliberative or forensic work. In other words, early extant oratory uses Socrates less as an available example in public debate than as a *topos* of controversy in protreptic or marketing pieces—these authors sought students, and they understood that they could display their wares by (fictionally)

12 Allen 2010 attempts to find Athenian reception of Plato in political speeches. Wallace 2015 studies Damon's influence on Athenian politics.

re-litigating Socratic events.¹³ Socrates the man, as well as reactions to his supposed associates Critias and Alcibiades, and his execution at the hands of the democracy, must have proved sufficiently salient or pertinent in pedagogical contexts. This might mean that Socratism ranged wider and had a felt effect further than what we now consider “philosophy”; the lore of Socrates’ rhetorical excellence, and the general value of virtue-teaching, allows it. Murphy’s chapter yields several more important historical results; here I will mention just a few, leaving the exciting conclusions about Lysias and Aeschines for the reader to discover. Murphy reconstructs Polycrates’ work as a paradoxological advertisement meant to lure students away from Socratic teachers, and redates it to the mid-380s. This sheds new light on Xenophon’s defenses of Socrates, which have long been understood as reactions to, among others, Polycrates. Isocrates’ *Busiris* also responds to Polycrates’ *Against Socrates*; Isocrates does not rave about that speech, though he hardly raves about Socrates’ supporters either, especially Antisthenes and those lauding the “unity of virtue” thesis. We see more approval of Socratism later in Isocrates’ career, perhaps with a softening marketplace for instruction: Isocrates appears to model the *Antidosis* (c. 353 BCE), probably the instigation for Aristotle’s own *Protrepticus* (“Exhortation to Philosophy”), on a Socratic apologia; and the *Panathenaicus* (c. 342–339) closes with a mock-dialogue of the Socratic variety. In any event, Socrates seems to have an amazing connection with literary production, and the genre of fiction in particular, at this early stage.¹⁴

We do not know when Plato started writing dialogues, or in what order. Historically many scholars have thought he wrote while Socrates still lived, and that he was trying to direct the course of history. Almost nobody now accepts that view, though for most dialogues not because they have counter-evidence; the thought seems simply to be that the execution and the hothouse atmosphere in Megara to which Plato, Euclides, Terpsion, and other friends repaired after the execution inspired and facilitated dialogue writing. Yet David Sider has shown that nothing prevents our believing that Plato wrote while Socrates was alive; Julius Tomin has written cleverly about Plato’s dialogues as fifth-century documents; and the existence of much else written about Socrates while he was still alive, and the claims about a Simon the Shoemaker, and Aristotle’s observation that Socratic dialogue began long before Plato, make it even plausible that people were writing Socratic dialogues

13 Adding to the sense of Socrates as *topos* is the near-ubiquity of Alcibiades across these speeches.

14 Thus Murphy’s chapter implicitly continues the argument of Kurke 2011.

during Socrates' life.¹⁵ The issue is a remarkably important one for reception studies, because it both governs what "access" Plato had, and "access" to what, when he wrote his earliest dialogues, and changes the social context against which to infer Plato's purposes for writing. Still, the evidence allows only that almost any starting date is possible. A more reliable approach to Platonic reception of Socrates takes an achronological avenue. That means looking for continuity across the dialogues. *Sandra Peterson* ("Plato's Reception of Socrates: One Aspect") focuses on a striking continuity: Plato presents Socrates as a person preoccupied by conversation. This for Plato constitutes both the legacy of Socrates and, almost independently from that, the practice that Plato and his readers ought to seek to understand, if we mean to take Socrates as a model for or insight into the successful life. What then, according to Plato, does Socrates in conversation do? His self- and other-examining questions uncover life-guiding convictions, and then he draws inferences from those convictions, for example that some interlocutor has contradictory views, or does not do what he takes the good man to do (and what he therefore thinks he ought to do). He does this to persuade people to care for virtue or, more simply, to take as their preeminent concern the avoidance of wrongdoing. A familiar enough idea, but Peterson's view, as an overall interpretation of Plato's writerly project, contrasts with those that say, for example, that Plato foregrounds or cares most about Socrates' paradoxes, or his radical individualism, or his authoritative teacherly presence, or (eventually) Socrates' generic necessity in (as some people think) dialogues without a Socratic sensibility (such as the *Philebus* or *Statesman*), even if we can nestle those elements into the larger view.

A consequence of the losses of other first-generation Socratics' writings is that we cannot tell how distinctive Plato's interpretation of Socrates and Socratic conversation really is. The dominance of Plato's dialogues surely results as much from the details of his Socrates interpretation as other considerations, institutional and creative: his family relations and his founding of the successful Academy, his having Aristotle and others as long-term students, his world-historical prose style and philosophical novelty and insight. For his Socratic reception itself, we have, practically speaking, two imperfect comparison cases. The first is Antisthenes, whose extant fragments number fewer than two hundred; the second is Xenophon, all of whose many Socratic and non-Socratic writings exist to this day but who falls somewhat outside the

15 Sider 1980; Tomin 1997.

Athenian intellectual tradition of the other Socratics. While fragments of other authors prove informative, they simply do not present even a blurry picture.¹⁶

Establishing the basic outlook of the “oldest” of Socratics, Antisthenes of Athens, is hard enough, but we cannot forego assessing the ancient claim that Antisthenes was the true representative of Socrates’ teachings. *Menahem Luz* (“Antisthenes’ Portrayal of Socrates”) accepts that Antisthenes knew Socrates from an earlier age, more continuously, and more intimately than Plato or Xenophon. But he seems also to have come to Socrates from a rhetoric background, perhaps as a student of Gorgias’, and in general we have no reason to assume that length of exposure equates with purity or immediacy of reception. In any event, we can perhaps draw two key conclusions about Antisthenes’ reception of Socrates. First, he treats as Socrates’ core traits his “inner strength” (*to karterikon*), which may be sufficient for virtue, and his wealth of spirit. Socrates serves as a wise counselor, Luz shows, but presumably his confidence in the advice he gives comes from his experience with his own indomitable soul, not from elenctic testing, life-long conversation, practices of self-knowledge, or the other socio-rational-linguistic exercises depicted by Plato. Second, Antisthenes’ episodic works seem to feature Socrates not as a uniquely sufficient ethical ideal but as one among others, such as Heracles. Consistent with this is the fact that Antisthenes includes himself or his own views in his works, aiming for clear teaching, on the belief that moral knowledge can be attained and transferred to others, perhaps thanks to paradigms and analogies. This suggests that we do not know whether Antisthenes spoke to what we now think of as Socratic ignorance, perhaps instead focusing on his judgment and discipline of desire;¹⁷ and that even if he did, we have no reason to believe that Antisthenes adopted such epistemic humility for himself. (In favor of this view is the ease with which most commentators on Plato—Aristotle being only the earliest of them—have believed that even Plato did not accept Socratic epistemic humility!) Indeed, while Antisthenes vaunted one Socratic conversational technique, *brachulogia* (“brief speech”), Luz argues that he seems to have doubted the Platonic elaboration as virtually endless back-and-forth exchanges, taking it instead to mean simple but persuasive

16 For Antisthenes, see Prince 2015; for other first-generation Socratics, see the collection of testimonies in *SSR* and Stavru and Moore 2018, Part 2.

17 This is suggested by an ancient biography of Socrates found in the papyrus *PHib.* 2.182, perhaps written by an Antisthenian or even Antisthenes himself; see McOsker 2018 and Dorandi 2018, 788–791. Fr. f emphasizes the restraint of base desires through training; fr. a and col. xi, determination of the appropriate desires. Moore 2017 argues for a view of *philosophia* to be attributed to Antisthenes that would support the same point.

explanations. The Antisthenean evidence forces stark questions about the Platonic perspective, making us wonder how much of the conversational optimism and epistemic pessimism counts as Plato's interpretation rather than the historical personality both he and Antisthenes are interpreting.¹⁸

Xenophon takes a middle course: sometimes depicting or describing Socrates' mode of critical examination, and nearly always presenting Socrates as engaged in one-on-one conversation (even if, for the sake of literary efficiency, eliding the interlocutors' responses, and, for the sake of literary variety, setting Socrates in a range of conversation types), he invariably portrays Socrates as a person who can and does give positive and determinate advice. But this hardly proves that Plato and Antisthenes stylized in opposite directions; Xenophon cannot be treated as a relatively unbiased source for the way Socrates really was, as his status as historian, without a philosophical school for which he had to drum up interest, might suggest. As *David Johnson* ("Xenophon's Socrates and the Socratic Xenophon") emphasizes, while Xenophon knew Socrates, he also read a lot of Socratic literature and took it upon himself to respond to it; he missed the last two (momentous) years of Socrates' life (of which we know only about the last days, but which Plato and Antisthenes surely knew in horrifying detail); and Xenophon was developing his own literary persona throughout his non-Socratic writings (as Antisthenes also did), such that his Socratic and non-Socratic ideas appear to have merged into one. This does not mean that Xenophon's Socrates tells us exclusively about Xenophon, though it does reveal much about his conception of leadership, civic education, and literary purpose. Johnson argues that Xenophon places himself as narrator in all his Socratic writings, even those at which he could not have been present, to indicate that he in fact (though perhaps elsewhere) had direct access to Socrates and was not wholly derivative of and dependent on other Socratic writers. This implies something about Xenophon's sense of status and the range of those he graded as competitors; but, more importantly, it shows that he purports to provide a more complete view than other authors were providing. He may accept the validity of aspects of the Platonic and Antisthenic portrayal but, at the same

18 If Aldo Brancacci (2000) is right to see Dio Chrysostom's significant reception of Socrates as largely (or even moderately) reliant on Antisthenes, we get further evidence both for the popularity or plausibility of Antisthenes' picture and, perhaps, for some of its content: as Brancacci notes, Dio's Socrates ignores "the most characteristic and fundamental themes of Plato's interpretation—the basic principle according to which no one errs voluntarily ...; the theme of *exetazein*, interpreted in an 'aporetic' sense ... rather than as the positive determination of a presumed objective meaning of names; the ideal of *dialogesthai* as *megiston agathôn*; the claim that poets do not possess knowledge; irony; the principle of *beltistos logos*" (245).

time, assert that both underplayed the breadth of Socrates' way of being.¹⁹ This may well be animated by Xenophon's own self-defense as a worldly and literarily adventurous person, as his many non-Socratic writings show, rather than a school-bound and rigorous philosopher, a self-defense not unrelated to Isocrates'—and Xenophon may have lived as un-Socratic a life as Isocrates did. Johnson concludes that we should see in Xenophon something quite modern, the sifting between literary and historical claims and evidence about Socrates with the intention not of getting factually correct what Socrates said but making sense of the underlying reality. Seeing his Socratic and non-Socratic work this way may allow us to see Xenophon's writerly and educational goals that much more clearly: as a fascinating, useful, and brilliant case of Socratic reception.

2 Greek Philosophy

Second-generation Socratics would have known people who knew Socrates, and they were the audience of all the (now mostly lost) postmortem writings of that first generation of Socratic writers. They would also have been members of groups who discussed, at great length, Socrates the fascinating cultural, political, and philosophical *exemplum* as one in an increasingly expansive corpus of interesting thinkers, such as Pythagoras, Empedocles, and Antisthenes. They may have also seen themselves as having *distance* on the assessment of Socrates, since they were not implicated in the toxic affairs of the previous turn of the century, and thus as having more objective ideas about his legacy. For our purposes these men amount to some of Plato's Academic students; the Megarian Bryson of Heraclea; Antisthenes' student Diogenes, soon to be founder of the Cynics; and at least one Peripatetic, Aristoxenus, whose father, Spintharus, may have known Socrates.²⁰ This volume attends to Aristotle, for the independent interest Aristotle provides and because his Socratic reception (obviously) far exceeds that of any of his contemporaries.

One could ask two main kinds of question about Aristotle's reception of Socrates. First, how has Socrates influenced Aristotle's philosophical outlook? The causal connection, from Socrates to Plato and from Plato to Aristotle, is plain. The dialectical and aporetic elements of Aristotle's program are familiar. The fundamental commitment to eudaimonism is evident, and

19 I argue in Moore 2018 that Xenophon assiduously avoided asserting that Socrates was a "philosopher."

20 For Aristoxenus, see Stavru 2018.

Aristotle's ethical works can be construed as arguing within the Socratic paradigm.²¹ But it is just as obvious that Aristotle draws from a vast history of philosophy of which Socrates is only a part, and perhaps—as Aristotle's works themselves make clear—only a small part. The second question develops this observation: how does Aristotle see Socrates in the history of philosophy or, more complicatedly, how does Socrates affect Aristotle's historiography of philosophy? My contribution ("Socrates in Aristotle's History of Philosophy") addresses this question.

I argue that Aristotle has an ambivalent attitude toward Socrates. On the one hand, he sees Socrates as only indirectly or minimally connected to the philosophical discipline he reconstructs, one concerned with advancing in *sophia* concerning both physical and unchanging principles. Socrates' innovative mode of inquiry, into definitions (and thus formal causes), amounted to a search for universals; and this somehow prompted Academics to formulate "separable" universals. None of these definitions concerned physical or metaphysical explanation, Aristotle's leading interests; Socrates cared exclusively about ethical virtue. Aristotle finds that Socrates' theses about ethics, principally the equivalence of knowledge and virtue and the related impossibility of incontinence (*akrasia*), look crazy. And when Aristotle mentions Socrates in other contexts, it is often as rather a cultural phenomenon than *prima facie* a normative philosopher. On the other hand, Aristotle attributes to Socrates novelty in his concern for *sullogizesthai*—basically, argument as such, but specifically the articulation of reasons for action—and, more precisely, the introduction of something like both deductive and inductive reasoning into philosophical thought. Aristotle also tends to introduce ethical puzzles by appeal to Socrates' thoughts (as he understands them), as though they are the most important ones to consider. And Socrates is presented as not the sole but the most complex and perhaps substantive influence on Plato, whom Aristotle treats as his most interesting philosophical interlocutor. In brief, Socrates straddles Aristotle's divisions of philosopher and dialectician, and of ethical and methodological thinker, one who has discernible moral and logical views but who also disavows all knowledge and asks only questions. He thus reveals the conceptual strengths and limitations of Aristotle's historiography of philosophy. His reception also shows how far Aristotle is from seeing himself as Socratic in spirit, in particular with respect to Socrates' epistemological modesty and personal and therapeutic approach to inquiry.

21 See Burger 2008.

A question I ignore in this chapter concerns the way Aristotle's research into and writings about Socrates affect the later reception of Socrates. Cicero's claim that Socrates brought philosophy down from the heavens (*Tusc.* 5.4.10) appears to have early Peripatetic or Academic provenance. Aristotle does not make so grandiose a claim in extant works, even if his lost *On Philosophy* could have said something like this;²² a more likely source might be Heraclides.²³ But Demetrius of Phalerum wrote about Socrates, too, though not in the context of the physics-related doxographies that had the greatest endurance in Antiquity.²⁴

Socrates had a largely but not exclusively positive uptake through the Hellenistic schools. Many (eventually) sought their origins in the Socratic movement, but the disagreements might be more interesting and informative than the proclamations of sympathy and historical connection. This section begins with three chapters that concern—from the edges, as it were—the Academy, the school that might be thought most Socratic. The mainstream of the Academy seems, with Plato's death (or even decades before!), to have turned largely away from Socrates.²⁵ But this is no *damnatio memoriae*; at least some Academics or para-Academics wrote vigorously about Socrates. *Mark Joyal* ("What is Socratic about the Pseudo-Platonica?") studies the Socrates depicted in the "Pseudo-Platonica," the dialogues that may have been written in the Old Academy and were conflated with Plato's genuine writings (or were posthumous developments of Platonic sketches),²⁶ as well as the dialogues obviously not written by Plato but that survived thanks to their accompanying

22 What is strange is that whereas Diogenes Laertius says that Archelaus was Socrates' teacher and inaugurated ethical and political thinking in philosophy, Aristotle makes no mention of Archelaus in any extant work. Aristotle does seem to allow that Democritus made some contributions to the new dialectical mode of philosophy.

23 Attribution to Heraclides is in Hutchinson and Johnson (forthcoming), on the grounds, among others, that Cicero cites him several paragraphs later; but the issue remains open. More important to ask is why Heraclides (or anyone else) would have made that observation. Was it an Academic truism? Was Socrates the most disciplinarily relevant member of the Sophistic moment to whom corporately "bringing down from the heavens" should really be attributed?

24 Demetrius: *SSR* 1 B 52–6.

25 John Dillon's *The Heirs of Plato: A Study of the Old Academy (347–274 BC)* (2003), does not include Socrates in the index; his *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (1977) contains three purely incidental references. Still, see Watts 2007 for Socratic reverberations in the Old Academy; and for Neoplatonism, Layne and Tarrant 2014 (an edited collection), Layne 2016 (bibliographic essay), and Layne 2018 (on Proclus).

26 For the view of the "dubia" as collaborative efforts, see Tarrant 2018.

the authentic and “dubious” works in the often-copied Platonic literary corpus.²⁷ Despite having been written by many hands over several centuries, Joyal finds important commonalities across the dialogues. Most accounts retain the Platonic flavoring of definitional questioning, professions of ignorance, advocacy of shared inquiry, and simmering eroticism. But they do not discuss the loaded concepts of Forms and Recollection, and they treat Socrates as, by and large, a wise advisor, one who avoids digression and who has a tendency for didactic monologues. Do we see here a regression toward the mean, a gradual deradicalizing of (Plato's) Socrates? At any rate, this study shows an evolution both in what people found most promising about Socrates and in what people found worthwhile to preserve from the genuine Platonic writings.

Just as most Academics took themselves to have moved beyond Socrates, having acquired epistemic grounds unknown to him, with at most a lingering appreciation for his pedagogical insights and moral integrity, Epicureans seem to have had at best qualified appreciation for Socrates as a valuable force in the history of philosophy. It has long been believed that Epicurus and Socrates presented to Antiquity opposed ideal types of the philosopher, and that Epicurus and Epicureans disdained Socrates. The texture of this disapprobation, its mellowing over the centuries, and the meaning of Epicurean reception of Socrates for our understanding of Epicurean philosophy have not, however, been carefully studied. *F. Javier Campos-Daroca* (“Epicurus and the Epicureans on Socrates and the Socratics”) addresses this limitation by canvassing every Epicurean reference to Socrates, much of it fragmentary and recently published; with this evidence base, he traces the evolution in Epicurean thinking about Socrates.²⁸ Epicurus (341–270 BCE) started teaching in Athens in the last decade of the fourth century, a period during which, for various reasons, combatting Socrates' philosophical views was not a primary concern. He took aim instead at Socrates as a model of pedagogical association, railing against his irony, his sympotic chattering, and his comportment. Indeed, though Epicurus engaged with the works of Socrates' students, he seems not to have thought much of Socrates as a philosopher—in this we might constructively compare Aristotle. Then there is information about three of Epicurus' immediate students, all hailing from Lampsacus. Metrodorus (331–277 BCE) took issue with Plato's depiction of Socrates in the *Euthyphro*. Idomeneus (c. 325–270 BCE), author

27 Luz 2017 has recently argued that the *Axiochus*, among the most famous of *spuria*, develops Platonic thought rather more than has been traditionally appreciated.

28 For discussion of Epicureans on the Socratics more generally, see Dorandi 2015 (169–70, 178–80 specifically on Socrates); for literary commonalities between them, see Heßler 2018.

of *On the Socratics*, reports on both Socrates' rhetorical excellence and intra-Socratic tensions,²⁹ which are to be contrasted with the peacefulness of the Garden. The mightiest abuse comes from Colotes (c. 320 to after 268 BCE), which, however, seems minimally informative, since he had it in for everyone, accusing all philosophers except his mentor of positing guidelines that would make living life in obedience to them impossible. He treats Socrates, as Epicurus did, as ironic and pretentious, even if he had ulterior motives in doing so, grinding his ax against Arcesilaus' Skeptical Academy; but his doing so shows that these early Epicureans saw Socrates' irony as his most or only salient quality. Two centuries later we have Philodemus (110–35 BCE), who again finds Socrates wanting: his *eirôneia* is that of the devious *alazôn*, and by being so tendentious he does not even lead conversations well. For all that, however, Campos-Daroca shows that Philodemus moderates that view. And, two further centuries on, Maximus of Tyre (c. 115–195 CE) gives Socrates' erotic stories an Epicurean twist. Naturally there remain deep questions about Socrates' hedonism, commitment to a philosophical system, and interest in physics, each of which if present would align him more closely with Epicureans. But the purported differences between Socrates and Epicureanism make the latter's reception of the former especially fruitful.

This section contains two chapters about a much more Socrates-sympathetic system, Stoicism, and its two best-preserved expounders.³⁰ Brian Earl Johnson ("The Syncretic Socrates of Epictetus") shows, with exhaustive attention to Socrates in Epictetus (55–135 CE), the way Socrates served as a Stoic role-model on a par with Diogenes of Sinope and Zeno of Citium. Epictetus, who drew from a range of sources, wanted to create a consistent account. His result: Socrates is practically a saint, uses *elenchus* for healing, and advises without teaching—and in sum, fits into Epictetus' framework for legitimate kinds of philosophical discourse—but lacks the irony, puzzle-wizardry, and edge we find in Plato. Without those inimitable traits, what could Epictetus see as so great about Socrates? Well, in brief, whatever Xenophon, on whose *Memorabilia* Epictetus drew copiously, saw as great. He may simply have ignored Plato's aporetic dialogues as just so many one-off refutations of pompous interlocutors, as interpreters even into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have. And he judged Socrates to have committed a Stoic suicide, and to have prioritized Stoic knowledge of one's *prohairesis* ("volition") in his repeated appropriation of the Delphic "know yourself."

29 For more about these tensions, see Brisson 2018.

30 Seneca seems to have been less philosophically engaged with Socrates than these two, per Sellars 2013, 107.

John Sellars ("Socratic Themes in the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius") studies both the dozen-odd references to Socrates in the *Meditations* and the shape of the *Meditations* itself, and concludes that Marcus Aurelius (121–180 CE) probably saw his work as a Socratic project. Relying on Plato, Epictetus, and the scraps of ideas circulating in his intellectual culture (as his letters with Fronto reveal), Aurelius distills the Socratic attitude as one concerned with self-cultivation, self-control, and the supremacy of virtue. These are the three goals he adopts for himself. For both Aurelius and Socrates, the highest good is understanding, which is the seat of the virtues; the impulses should be subordinated to them through a process of intense self-discipline. The importance of this finding is that the two men otherwise have seemed strictly different: the earlier is someone who spent his life in public conversation; the later is an emperor and general who was a solitary journal-writer. What is especially interesting is that Aurelius uses Socrates rather than an early Stoic (which orthodoxy might recommend) as his model.

Plutarch, generally categorized as a Middle Platonist, knows a vast range of (extant and lost) work on Socrates, which he quotes or alludes to through his oeuvre, not least significantly in his *De genio Socratis*. As with much ancient biography, he focuses rather on Socrates' life and death than on his thought—believing that on the facts concerning a person's experience supervene a moral significance—but he does not entirely ignore the latter (though when he does cite a Socratic idea it often sounds cliché or banal). In short, for Plutarch, "Socrates was a 'champion of the truth,' 'divinely inspired towards virtue,' free from humbug and reliant on sober reason and a steadfast judgment."³¹ But Socrates did not just stand as an independent model of the successfully ethical life. According to Plutarch, Socrates expanded philosophy to include political action and leadership; the politician as educator has its premier exemplar in Socrates. Plutarch's most famous achievements are his *Parallel Lives*, comparisons of Greek and Roman statesmen who present or undermine putative moral exemplars for their present audiences. *Mark Beck* ("Plutarch's Primary Use of the Socratic Paradigm in the *Lives*") shows that Socrates plays a powerful role in these comparisons. In many cases, Roman *exempla* fail morally to count as *exempla* when compared with Socrates. Beck's chapter presents Plutarch's complex goals in his *Parallel Lives*, for example in the *Lives* of Cato the Elder, Cato the Younger, and Phocion, and details differences the image of Socrates makes in them. Plutarch brings Socrates into then-current debates in an urgent rather than abstract or antiquarian way.

³¹ Roskam 2018, 756 (citations removed). See also Herschbell 1988; Pelling 2005.

At the far end of the Academy is Damascius (c. 460–after 540 CE), the last ancient Platonist. Damascius differs from other (previous) Platonists who, so *Damian Caluori* (“Socratic Methods in Damascius”) argues, cared rather less than he did for Socrates: where they wanted dogma, Damascius seemed glad to study and learn from Socrates’ dialectical, maieutic, and erotic approaches. While his available literary genres, the philosophical commentary and the treatise, prevented him from “erotically” regulating his readers’ desires in the way that Socratic conversation or written dialogue might, he endeavored to adopt other Socratic traits, including the revelation of *aporiai* in his readers and the deployment of written *elenchus* and *maieusis*. Damascius does not differ absolutely from his predecessors; Proclus, Olympiodorus, and Hermias also vaunted Socrates as a model for rationality and knowledge, a knowledge that they took as practical, an art, useful for education. But he works to integrate a Socratic methodology into a (Neo-)Platonic system that might otherwise seem too arid or self-confident for the earthy Socratism of its founder.

3 Roman Writers

Already with the Stoics we have begun studying Roman reception of Socrates, albeit a reception strongly influenced by a Greek philosophical tradition. In the next section of the volume, we have four chapters on Roman para-philosophical authors, writers deeply influenced by Athenian schools but not themselves woven into any specific tradition or program. At this point Socrates, bound to no school, becomes representative of Greekness and a certain distinctive, even for some a pungent and sensuous, unconventional way of life.

The most philosophical of the authors discussed here is Cicero (106–43 BCE), who makes frequent reference to Socrates throughout his rhetorical and philosophical works (though, notably, not in popular speeches or letters). Cicero accepts contemporary Stoic and Academic views of Socrates, that he is the father of philosophy and a deeply wise person. But the interpretative challenge for Cicero, according to *Sean McConnell* (“Cicero and Socrates”), is Socrates’ anti-rhetoric stance. Roman society, and Cicero’s livelihood, depended on eloquent and persuasive speech; it simply cannot reject it as tantamount to deception and self-deception. Cicero solves the problem in two directions. He adds rhetoric to the list of philosophically acceptable activities, thereby innovating and making Roman philosophy to that extent un-Socratic. But by emphasizing Socrates’ own radical innovation of philosophy, making Greek philosophy concerned with ethics and politics, he preserves his importance for Roman philosophy, which, being practical, is concerned with little else.

Socrates' irony Cicero recognizes as a conversational virtue rather than a tool necessary for philosophy, and his constant *elenchus* Cicero recognizes as a salutary method of skepticism, diffidence about putting forward views of one's own, rather than a weapon to refute and devoice others. The crown of Cicero's Roman reception of Socrates involves the praise of Socrates' stands against tyranny and his fearlessness toward death.

Cedric Littlewood ("Socrates in Roman Satire") writes about Horace (65–27 BCE), Persius (34–62 CE), Juvenal (c. 55–127 CE), and Apuleius (125–170 CE). Satire lampoons high or foreign learning, as it takes Greek-originating philosophy to be. But it also aims at moral correction, as philosophy does. So it provides an incisive if mixed account of Socrates. Socrates' intimate friendships seem very *Greek* to a Roman audience, and Apuleius plays up Socrates' occult aspects. But Socrates also deals with the bodily and appetitive sides of life with which comedy and satire deal so closely, and which for many people give satire a more realistic, accessible, and thus promising educative effect. Thus Socrates provides satire both a convenient and hilarious butt of its jokes and a predecessor for its moral efforts.

The rhetorical theorist Quintilian (c. 35–100 CE), who writes frequently about Socrates, shares Socrates' cauterizing irony, as *Curtis Dozier* ("The Rhetoric of Socrates in Quintilian's *Institutio Oratio*") advances in this chapter. Dozier observes that Quintilian's claims about Socrates are false, but so obviously false as to require an explanation other than "He's mistaken." Dozier's solution: Quintilian adopts a sort of Socratic irony. More precisely, Quintilian wants his readers to observe the devious power of rhetoric in his own texts, and so he misappropriates the authority-bolstering Socrates. He does this in particular by the dubious inclusion of Socrates in inductive arguments from examples, the very argumentative technique for which Socrates was famous. Checking Quintilian's attitude toward his sources of Socrates, Dozier shows that he judges the first-generation Socrates to have written rhetorically about their teacher, and that he therefore wants his readers to exercise cautious skepticism about them, too. Dozier's rereading of Quintilian might be judged both radical and exemplary of the reception model, fresh insight into an author earned by studying his uptake of someone seemingly so distinct but in the end markedly similar.

This section concludes with a chapter on second-century Rome, focusing on Aulus Gellius (c. 125–before 192 CE), an urbane polymath fond of philosophy but who nevertheless did not identify himself as a philosopher. He was also fond of Socrates, citing him in his extant work, *Attic Nights*, more times than anybody but his teacher Favorinus, Plato, or Aristotle. *Leofranc Holford-Strevens* ("Socrates in Aulus Gellius") finds that this work contains otherwise unattested

anecdotes about Socrates. These, and the better-known ones he uses, focus on Socrates' patience and self-discipline, and the moral benefit in his tutelage: both Socrates and Gellius champion everyday morality. Gellius does not discuss Socrates' *daimonion* sign, and unlike his friend Fronto, he stays mum about the art of love. The chapter concludes with a comparison to the Socratic reception by some of Gellius' contemporaries: Fronto (c. 100–170 CE), Aelius Aristides (117–181 CE), Apuleius (125–170 CE), and Galen (130–210 CE).

4 Late Antiquity and the Medieval Period

This volume's first half has studied pagan authors. We now turn to Socrates' reception by several individual and groups of Christian or Christian-influenced authors (with one exception).³² He comes to be compared with Jesus—characterologically, doctrinally, and in his final moments—but the status of his piety and his belief in (a single) God come under close scrutiny. He stands for a peculiar strain of pagan philosophy, but is also assimilated to a trans-historical wisdom tradition.

This section begins with the earliest Latin-writing Christian theological author, Tertullian (c. 155–240 CE), and thus the first to write about Socrates—and so, as might be expected, among the most influential authors on later Christian writers.³³ But he also stands out, by contrast with, for example, Justin Martyr (c. 100–165 CE) and with many later Christians, for his scorn toward Socrates. Tertullian believes, for example, that Socrates' epistemic confidence, grounded in sheer reason rather than revealed scripture, could only have been a sham, and that his *daimonion* sign, in second- and third-century thinking the manifestation of an evil demon, implies unpurified idolatry. But Tertullian does show some sympathy for the Greek, and whether there's any principled reason for doing so is the subject of *Juraj Franek's* chapter ("The Reception of Socrates in Tertullian"). The answer is basically "no": Tertullian uses Socrates merely as exemplar for his various apologetic purposes. (This does reveal the enduring power of the Socratic icon wherever Classical education remains.) For instance, Tertullian approves, as he sees it, of Socrates' rejection of the

32 This volume does not feature a chapter on Jewish reception of Socrates, which in its minor appearances has been largely influenced by Arabic reception; see, e.g., Danzig 2007; Halper 2017.

33 Interestingly, Augustine (354–430), now the more prominent author, mentions Socrates rather little, only in *City of God* 8, 14, 18; *True Religion* 1; and *Harmony of the Gospels* 1.

Athenians' gods, since they are not the Christian God, whatever Socrates' reasons for doing what looks like such a rejection.

The people whose reception of Socrates we have studied to this point have shared the one thing with which they differ most markedly from Socrates—they are all writers, whether creators of verse or prose, assertions or drama, fictions or memoirs or treatises. They have something to say, they come up with it, whatever their reliance on historical evidence or oral lore, and they put it into print. The chapter by *Susan Prince* ("Socrates in Stobaeus: Assembling a Philosopher") addresses someone who also has something to say, and puts it into print, but writes virtually nothing in his own name. Scholarship now knows John of Stobi (from the capital of the Roman province in the present-day Republic of Macedonia) mostly as the laconic "Stob." cited for his *Anthology*, a morally edifying commonplace book in four volumes, 206 chapters, and 10,000 passages, excerpting from a huge library of (now mostly lost) Greek literature. It includes more than twelve dozen sayings or discussions attributed to Socrates—that is, even beyond its numerous passages quoted from Plato and Xenophon. If many of these sayings have limited value as historical evidence for Socrates' actual views, they present an at least hazy sense of the things people in the centuries following Socrates' life thought he stood for, and, in particular, of the ethically worthwhile things deserving of attribution to a sage.

All this, however, does not represent Stobaeus' reception of Socrates—how Stobaeus understood Socrates, and what we learn about Stobaeus' philosophical views via studying his use of Socrates—so much as it represents the lore extant in the fifth century CE. What Prince attends to is his placement of Socratic material in his volume. For, despite the claim in the previous paragraph, the *Anthology* is no mere commonplace book; it has a finely wrought architecture, with headings and subheadings (e.g., "On Virtue"; "On Discipline"), and, so Prince shows, careful (if sometimes opaque) organization of passages within each subheading. Stobaeus thus says what he means through his placement of passages (e.g., Socrates') throughout chapters (e.g., at the opening or close) throughout the structure of his book (e.g., in the ethical sections). Inferring Stobaeus' views through a sort of reverse-engineering of the distribution of Socratic sayings proves a difficult and subtle process. But Prince shows, convincingly, that Stobaeus understands Socrates "as a skeptic in the fields of physics and logic, an earnest ethicist who is more interested in general than particular questions and most interested in topics connected with the virtues of intelligence and self-control, a moderate but not extreme social critic, and a political citizen." There are good reasons to take Stobaeus as himself particularly sympathetic with these positions.

We now turn to a series of interpretative communities that partially constitute the international story of Late-Antique reception. We begin with *Ute Pietrushka's* "Syriac Reception of Socrates." Syriac, the Aramaic language of the Middle East, and after Latin and Greek the most important early Christian language, began absorbing Greek literature beginning in the fourth century. By the sixth century, it had accumulated a corpus of medical texts, especially Galen, and philosophy, mainly Aristotle's *Organon* and then Porphyry and Plotinus. Interestingly, no genuine Plato texts got translated, only pseudo-Platonica.³⁴ This does not mean that Syriac intellectuals knew nothing else of Plato; they must simply have read certain of the dialogues in Greek and decided not to translate them. And they apparently digested and translated the many and still-inadequately-understood Greek gnomologia, collections of sayings and anecdotes attributed to wise persons of the past. Many such sayings were attributed to Socrates, who, as Pietrushka shows, was the model of a wise ascetic, an exemplar of the philosophical life, and an exemplar of the philosophical death. Syriac authors (or unknown Greek sources) were creative, too, inventing a Socratic dialogue on the soul,³⁵ and stylizing his asceticism as (a culturally acceptable) misogyny. The Syriac Socratic material reveals, therefore, both the most resonant aspect of Socrates—what it means to practice a certain social minimalism—and what the Christians could find acceptable about the Greek tradition. Its philosophical importance, since the gnomological material was really too heterogeneous to ground a theoretical system, is primarily its being one of several conduits of Greek philosophy into Arabic.

That reception is the topic of *Elvira Wakelnig's* chapter ("Socrates in the Arabic Tradition: An Esteemed Monotheist with Moist Blue Eyes"). Wakelnig argues that translation of Greek/Syriac gnomologia, alongside the more comprehensive and rigorous translation of most of Greek philosophy, science, and medicine, was to build confidence in readers that the Greek writers were morally sound people. Beyond that, Wakelnig shows the remarkably flexible usage to which Arabic intellectuals put Socrates, describing his appearance,

34 In Armenian, too, only five Platonic dialogues ever got translated from Greek (*Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Timaeus*, *Laws*, and *Minos*), and perhaps not until the eleventh century (Conybeare 1891). It must be highlighted that even into the modern era, Platonic dialogues of currently uncertain authenticity had a much more central place in the study of Greek philosophy than they do now. For example, the earliest English translation of some of Plato's texts (made from André Dacier's earlier French translation) begins with *Alcibiades I, II*, and *Theages*, and, then, after *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Phaedo*, *Laches*, and *Protagoras*, ends with *Rival Lovers*.

35 See the discussion in Newbold 1918.

granting him and then analyzing his detailed monotheistic theological views, and ascribing literary authorship to him.³⁶

Historically contiguous with and bibliographically dependent on the Arabic authors about Socrates were the Medieval Christian writers. *Nadia Bray* ("Socrates, 'Princeps Stoicorum,' in Albert the Great's Middle Ages") tracks and coordinates all such references to Socrates. She shows that only in the eleventh century did thinkers come to have more than minimal knowledge, and that by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, many thinkers approved of Socrates. But some did not: they conflated his views with the Stoics', and distinguished those from (normative) Aristotelianism. The Stoics, they believed, erred in idolizing human reason. Bray traces this conflation back to Albert the Great (c. 1200–1280), the first commentator on the complete (extant) works of Aristotle. He fixated on a doctrine inferred from (his indirect knowledge of) Plato's *Meno*, that Socrates equated knowledge and virtue, and thought knowledge came from recollection. He understood this to be a Stoic, and non-Christian, view.

Michele Trizio ("Socrates in Byzantium") writes about the Byzantine thinkers contemporary with Bray's Western Medieval brethren. They could rely on better resources through their entire history, if they also tended to follow the interpretative lines of Patristic and Neoplatonist forebears. This chapter reviews some of the most interesting deployments of Socratica. Some authors, including Theodore Metochites, showed a renewed interest in Socratic irony and the Socratic problem; in the antagonism and mutual reliance of philosophy and rhetoric; and in Socrates' skepticism and declarations of ignorance. Some, such as Barlaam of Calabria, even used Socrates' trial as a model for their own persecutions for heterodoxy, and began re-valuing Socratic method as a route to knowledge.

5 Early Modern Europe

We arrive now at, so to speak, the modern world. *James Hankins* has traced the history of Socratic reception in the Renaissance.³⁷ Little was known of Plato in Italy and Europe before 1400. This began to change with the humanist Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406), who wanted to know about Socrates' bringing philosophy down from the heavens, presaging the de-Scholasticizing civic philosophy favored by the end of the fourteenth century. So he encouraged

36 See further, e.g., Alon 2006 (summarizing the author's two books on Socrates Arabus); Adamson 2007 (Al-Kindi's Socratic ethics and reception); Wakelnig 2016 (bibliography).

37 Hankins 2006, 2010.

his mentee Leonardo Bruni (c. 1370–1441) to translate Socratic dialogues, eventually Plato's *Phaedo*, *Crito*, *Apology*, *Gorgias*, part of the *Symposium*, and Xenophon's *Apology*. In 1431, Ambrogio Traversari (1386–1439) translated Book Two of Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, which addresses the Presocratic philosophers, Socrates, and the first-generation Socratics. Then around 1440, relying on better sources than any previous Christian Latin author, Giannozzo Manetti wrote *Vita Socratis*, the first biography of Socrates since Antiquity. This assemblage of material presents Socrates as, according to Hankins (in "Manetti's Socrates and the Socrateses of Antiquity"), "an authority for and *exemplum* of the humanist cultural project," the proper philosopher to oppose to "school philosophy." He ignores nearly all the "Socratic doctrines" except the Jesus-approved "suffering is better than committing injustice"; Socrates' emphasis on self-reliant reason evidently does not easily square with Humanistic reliance on authoritative books and on Christian grace. But the biography must confront some aspects of Socrates' life that are difficult for a Christian to appreciate. So, unlike Tertullian, Manetti interprets the *daimonion* sign as witness to Socrates' good guardian angel; Socrates' wisdom as a natural disposition, not a false confidence in light of his ignorance of Scripture; and Socrates' *enkrateia* as Christian patience and his professions of ignorance as a sign of humility and the commendable work of taking down pretended experts. This redemptive biography had an unexpected cultural impact, thanks to its inclusion as an appendix to the era's most popular edition of Plutarch's *Lives*, one that stayed in print for almost the next century. But it was not the only Renaissance Socrates, Hankins argues. Relative to Manetti's Xenophontic Socrates, an "eloquent model citizen," Ficino's is a Neoplatonic holy man. His proclamations of ignorance are understood in terms of negative theology and divine infusion of wisdom. He came to be seen as a Jesus Christ *avant la lettre*—thanks, in part, to some strategic Bowdlerizing.

After the Renaissance, the most important recipient of Socrates is Montaigne (1533–1592). It is no surprise that Montaigne admired and wrote extensively about Socrates: each presents his life as one dedicated to continuous self-examination and striving for self-knowledge, practices dependent at once on a shared doubt about the transparency to himself of his desires, beliefs, and expertises and on an omnivorous curiosity about those who might have something to teach him. But this similarity puts into relief a manifest difference: Montaigne examined himself through writing, albeit in response to voluble authors through the centuries, whereas Socrates wrote nothing, though his interrogative and protreptic conversations would become literary fodder for untold authorial followers. Moreover, Montaigne was consciously writing an autobiography, putting himself forward as somebody

worth reading about, whereas Socrates seems to have established himself as a figure for study only indirectly, as a person who, all-too-memorably, put a mirror up to others, so that they might reflect on themselves. A leading task for the Montaignian reception of Socrates has thus been to understand what Montaigne took himself to be doing—writing his life by essaying his views and compositing those of others—while having the beliefs and sentiments about Socrates, evidently a powerful inspiration but not a model to which he hewed closely, that he reveals himself to have. More simply, what is it that Montaigne esteems about Socrates, and how does Montaigne justify going his own route, diarizing at home rather than disambiguating his neighbors' views in town? More philosophically, what distinguishes the two attitudes toward self-knowledge, and how do Montaigne's writings about Socrates help us make sense of and then evaluate them? Finally, the ethical dimension: Socratic self-knowledge aims at becoming a more just person; but at what goods, if any, does Montaigne's autobiographical effort aim, for himself and for his reader? Important recent investigations into Montaigne's thinking about Socrates have focused on the problem of exemplarity and authenticity: how can one follow the lead of an individual, without either failing oneself to become *individual* (because one is simply copying another person, which the object of one's emulation by hypothesis did not do) or failing to follow *that* individual (because one has a merely idealized vision of him, knowing only his doctrines but not his character and lived life)?³⁸ This problem requires, eventually, recourse to more fundamental questions, such as the nature of (moral) exemplars, the meaning of (ethically pertinent) authenticity, and the invulnerability of character to external or even internal influence. But, more immediately, it requires a finer-grained appreciation for Montaigne's judgment of Socrates, which is colored by his sources for Socrates, his autobiographical goals, and his moral expectations. *Alison Calhoun* ("Writing Montaigne's Socrates with Diogenes Laertius and Plutarch") provides this. She argues that Montaigne relies not just on Xenophon and Plato for his information about Socrates but also, to a remarkable extent, Diogenes Laertius, the Late-Antique author of the *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*. But this is not just for anecdotes otherwise not known from those two classical authors—of which Diogenes certainly has many. It is for an attitude toward telling ancient lives. Diogenes famously combines doctrinal reports with various life events, life events which do not always cohere readily with the norms espoused by the various philosophers. There is also contradiction and uncertainty. Calhoun explains the well-known variability in Montaigne's uptake of Socrates as of a piece with

38 See, e.g., Limbrick 1973; Waddington 1980; Nehamas 1998; MacPhail 2001; Kritzman 2009.

this Laertian tendency, appreciating whatever evidence he can find even if that requires foregoing the integrity of the whole or the preservation of the ideal. This “patchwork” approach has at least two advantages. First, allowing that it may also posit impossibilities, it gives air to the actual messiness and out-of-character actions of even the most celebrated human life. Virtue manifests not just in heroic deeds but in recuperation and recovery. Second, it stymies attempts to take any biographed philosopher as worthy of direct emulation. Their seeming excellences may be negated by something else, or may not be excellences at all, just lucky traits given the idiosyncratic circumstances. Montaigne amplifies this second advantage by taking a line from Plutarch, giving studiously complex comparisons between people, which can recast an ideal type as simply a local success, one from which it would be silly to generalize much.

Theological philosophers in the eighteenth century appealed frequently and robustly to Socrates as they addressed the central question of the day, one that has proved crucial in our passage to a modern secular age: what can reason say about religion, and by extension, about the fundamental issues of human happiness and meaning? We have already seen Socrates’ status as a religious expert or innovator appreciated or debated in our chapters on Tertullian, the Arabic Socrates, and the Renaissance period. He gets put to related use in the English-speaking eighteenth century. Long appreciated as an exemplar of virtue and as a martyr of enlightened reason—Hume, for example, admired his rigorous skepticism—*Felicity P. Loughlin* (“Socrates and Religious Debate in the Scottish Enlightenment”) unravels another poignant strand in the reception of Socrates in Scottish Enlightenment thought. Philosophers and theologians, prizing him as among history’s most astute minds, and recognizing his wont to talk about god, the soul, death and immortality, and human purpose—indeed, they acknowledged in him a sort of Christianity *avant la lettre*—cited his very *failure* to reason successfully about religion as proof that *nobody* could reason successfully about religion. Socrates served for them as the best negative case against natural religion and in favor of revealed religion, even if Socrates never explicitly takes a stand against natural religion (and may even seem to appreciate arguments from design or intuition).

6 The Nineteenth Century

Hayden W. Ausland (“Socrates in the Early Nineteenth Century, Become Young and Beautiful”) locates the key moment in modern Socratic scholarship with the 1818 “Über den Werth des Sokrates als Philosophen” (“On the Value

of Socrates as a Philosopher”) of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834). This chapter recovers, in tight detail, the German and Dutch precursors to that essay in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, a time which saw considerable new translation activity, including the first complete German translation of the Platonic dialogues since 1602, and German scholarship in the thirty subsequent years, until K.F. Hermann’s “Die historischen Elemente des platonischen Staatsideals” of 1849. Before this period, reconstructions of Socrates were eclectic, and then they became mostly of the Xenophontic wise-advisor type we have seen recur throughout this volume. Schleiermacher, giving a chronological ordering to Plato’s dialogues, drew from Plato’s account, and strove to replace eclecticism with a scientific research method. Christian Brandis (1790–1867) added Aristotle’s testimony to the mix, thereby emphasizing the ethical dimension nowadays assumed the one obvious thing about Socrates. Then scholars took cognizance of Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, which led, with some Hegelian infusions, to the view that Socrates stood for subjective rationality against convention and tradition. The program of Eduard Zeller (1814–1908) contributed to the distinction between Socrates and Plato (for more details of which see Raymond’s paper, below). The moral of this story, according to Ausland (and recapitulated by Wolfsdorf, below), is that late twentieth-century understanding of Socrates recapitulates or develops early nineteenth-century views, and so our present views ought not to be assumed to be natural or inevitable.

Samuel Frederick (“Astonished Thought: Friedrich Schlegel’s Appropriation of Socratic Irony”) tells the story of a great exponent of German Romanticism, the once-student of Classical philology, scholarly collaborator of Schleiermacher’s, and probable instructor of Hegel: Friedrich Schlegel. Schlegel argued for Socrates’ continued relevance to philosophy, as the representation of a life in self-aware pursuit of an unattainable “absolute” knowledge. This is Socrates’ celebrated Schlegelian irony: a striving after the infinite—fundamental reality or unconditioned explanation—in full appreciation of one’s finitude. We see this in Socrates’ humble refusal to systematize while also refusing the lesser glories of a reductive or naturalizing empiricism. Schlegel’s is at once an epistemological Socrates, one admittedly less sanguine than Hegel’s about the accessibility of knowledge, and a practical one, whose dialogical and self-aware way of life provides a concrete model for then-contemporary thought.

The most impressive philosophical response to Socrates during the period of Ausland’s chapter is found in Hegel (1770–1831). For Hegel, *Brady Bowman* argues (“Hegel on Socrates and the Historical Advent of Moral Self-Consciousness”), Socrates is a tragic figure, whose moral and intellectual self-reliance butted up against the embedded cultural norms of Athens, which its agents could not

simply abandon. The chapter shows the extent of similarities between Socrates and the Sophists (especially Protagoras), and Hegel's sincere and elaborate criticism of Socrates, that Socrates could not show how normative ideals are to be followed in concrete historical situations. This is a consequence of Socrates' purely negative, critical, or aporetic way of life, which is the way of life he shares with the tradition-criticizing Sophists. In a word, he lacks an account of the good. Thus Hegel criticizes Socrates for the same failure for which he criticizes Kant. Yet Hegel also grants Socrates world-historical importance as the icon of "moral individuality as such."

As this volume has been showing, for a majority of the history of his reception, Socrates' elenctic mission, his argumentative knack for undermining proffered definitions, and the resulting improved self-constitution brought about by sharper appreciation of one's beliefs and desires—the attitude toward the philosophical life, his tool of prosecuting it, and the consequence of adopting these that strike contemporary readers as most salient about him—did not figure centrally in people's thinking about him. Indeed, we rarely see it after Plato and the Platonic dialogues until the early nineteenth century in German scholarship. Even the Scottish Enlightenment authors, as we have noted, appreciated him rather for his supreme thoughtfulness, his advocacy of reason, and his wholehearted faith in the divine. But we do see it in English-language philosophy at the same time as the German-language philosophy discussed above, not surprisingly given shared corpora of contemporary thought and, perhaps, related economic and political conditions. Quite interestingly, we see it most vividly in the work of philosophers who are not practitioners of ancient philology but who are deeply committed to its value nevertheless: the Utilitarians James Mill, George Grote, and John Stuart Mill. As *Antis Loizides* ("The Mills") presents it, Socrates was their hero, but in a precisely delineated way. They focused on Socrates' personal elenctic method, his attempts to improve his interlocutors' connections between statement, belief, and justification. His examination of views sought not merely the purgation of the false ones but the constitution of agency, helping a person act on the basis of good or at least more fully understood reasons. Beyond the benefit to private or epistemic liberation, Socrates' practice had capacious social benefits, militating against prejudice, bias, and obscurity. Loizides provides, in addition to this account of a salutary Socratic practice, connected to nineteenth-century studies of logic and inductive method, important bio-historical observations about James Mill's substantive influence on his son's views.

David Schur's and *Lori Yamato's* study of Kierkegaard (1813–1855) ("Kierkegaard's Socratic Way of Writing") shows how he, by contrast, so appreciates Socrates' ironic assertions of ignorance as to replicate them

in his own fashion, even as he advocates total commitment to a way of life. Schur and Yamato focus on the paradoxical fact that Kierkegaard's Socratism involves not foregoing writing but writing *a lot*. Kierkegaard realized that Socrates forewent writing to avoid making authoritative pronouncements; rather than foregoing writing, however, Kierkegaard sought to undermine authoritative pronouncements in another way—through complex practices of pseudonymity, framing, humor, and genre-bending. Thus a noisy writer can still embrace “the silence of the philosopher,” and we get a post-Platonic, post-Montaignean lesson in the way that a philosopher might “produce” work but still follow the Socratic knowledge of ignorance. This chapter raises deep Socratic questions about the nature of “authorship” in its relation to self-knowledge and epistemic authority.

Such questions of writing and authority, combined with those of research and the limits of rationality, arise again in *Christopher C. Raymond's* study, “Nietzsche's Revaluation of Socrates.” Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) has long been treated as having an ambivalent, “love-hate” attitude toward Socrates. But Raymond argues against this psychologizing attempt to redeem, for Socrates-lovers, Nietzsche's critical statements about the Greek. He studies Nietzsche's early and late discussions of Socrates instead for the information it provides for Nietzsche's overall philological-philosophical project. Setting the details of his early iconoclastic lecture on Socrates into the Zeller-dominated worldview of Classicists—a progressivist account that had Socrates advancing the cause of *Wissenschaft* (“research”) that Plato and Aristotle brought into further perfection—we see that Nietzsche used Socrates, more than anything, as a figure to critique what he saw as the narrow-minded *Wissenschaft* of his own discipline. Raymond explains that the very evidentiary wobbliness of Nietzsche's Socratic reception, full of tendentious, unsubstantiated, and false assertions about the ancient world, fits his critical-rhetorical program, sacrificing philological scrupulosity for philosophical free creativity. That early lecture presents a Socrates not dissimilar to, though less far-reaching in his effects than, the Socrates in *The Birth of Tragedy*. And the Socrates in Nietzsche's late works, contrary to common conception, plays almost the same role as he always did, even if some details and emphases have changed.

7 The Twentieth Century

The final section of this volume contains five chapters on twentieth-century figures. *Oskari Kuusela* (“Wittgenstein's Reception of Socrates”) argues that whereas Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) is taken as believing—and in fact

believed, into the 1930s—that the Socratic quest for definition was mistaken, assuming conceptual unity without demonstrating it, he stopped asserting that later on. He reconsidered his views, recognizing that Socratic definitional inquiry has a range of methodological values, ones he himself could accept.³⁹ This is important because, as both a critic of philosophy and a novel practitioner of it, it is helpful to see Wittgenstein's awareness of potential parallels with another critic/innovator of philosophy.

Dolores Amat ("Leo Strauss' Socrates and the Possibility of Philosophy in Our Time") shows the way Leo Strauss (1899–1973) studied Socrates as a political philosopher, perhaps *the* political philosopher who can still help us. And we do need help standing up against modern positivism, Strauss argues, as it slouches toward nihilism and so-called value-neutrality. Studying the ancients, in general, rejuvenates the moral and political imagination. This chapter engages in a salutary conversation with the chapter on Nietzsche: Strauss judged Nietzsche as too pessimistic about the opportunities reason can provide for improving political life, having given incomplete reflection on the solutions offered by the ancients—in short, he was too Aristophanic, too worried about Socrates' undermining of social certainties. But Strauss also judged Platonic optimism perhaps too sanguine in its belief that reason can defend itself on its own terms. A truer Socrates, between Aristophanes and Plato, seems to have kept open the hard questions that resound even today.

Len Lawlor's chapter on Michel Foucault ("Sacrifice a Cock to Asclepius: The Reception of Socrates in Foucault's Final Writings") describes the way Socrates becomes a key player in his last five years of work. Foucault (1926–1984) sees Socrates, which he studied primarily through Plato's *Apology*, *Laches*, and *Alcibiades*, as of fundamental historical importance, but in a way distinct from Hegel and Nietzsche before him: for Foucault, Socrates shifts the focus within philosophy from self-care to self-knowledge, and from *parrhêsia* ("frank speech") as political to *parrhêsia* as self-constituting. His self-testing practices address Foucault's thinking about the ways subjects speak truth about themselves. And Socrates' self-care addresses Foucault's juxtaposition of corporal and discursive practices.

Karel Thein ("Socratic Voices in Derrida's Writings") takes up Jacques Derrida's (1930–2004) critique of the history of Western philosophy's adoration of reasoning without curiosity about its limits. Platonism is a prime target; Socrates becomes partial recipient of that assault. In the process, Socrates' unconventional relationship to writing and speaking arises. Questions about the relationship between Socratic practice (self-knowledge, truthfulness,

39 For broader studies of Wittgenstein's reception of Socrates, see Rowe 2007; Kienzler 2013.

irony) and Platonic metaphysics (stable forms of things knowable only in abstraction from experience) arise, in particular why Plato puts his own views (to the extent he does) in Socrates' voice. Derrida asks how diffident we can be concerning the grounds of self-knowledge, the priority of definition, and so forth, and queries philosophy's reluctance to inquire after its own limits.

The Socratic interpretation now best known in the English-speaking world was influenced by analytic philosophy, and was popularized by Gregory Vlastos (1907–1991). As narrated by *David Conan Wolfsdorf* ("Socrates, Vlastos, and Analytic Philosophy"), it was a surprising turn of events that analytic philosophy came to have any ethical or historical interest, prerequisites for any interest in Socrates. After all, it was originally allied with non-cognitivism and expressivism, and sought to find arguments to analyze with a clarity that allows criticism and transparent advance, and such arguments are more readily found in contemporary scholarship than in ancient texts. Only with new commitments that allowed for rigorous ethical reflection, and the appreciation that cogent meta-ethical, moral epistemological, and relevant metaphysical ideas arose in ancient texts could Socrates be an object for analytic investigation. And he could be, Wolfsdorf clarifies, only if one could find a Socrates with arguments. Suitable arguments, fortunately, are found in Plato, and for various reasons in a set of dialogues that came to be called "early" or, somewhat circularly, "Socratic." (There is usually ambivalence or unconcern about whether Plato's ("early") Socrates is the historical Socrates, since there is a belief that Plato's ("early") Socrates is at least a coherent and non-Platonic philosopher.)⁴⁰ Vlastos popularized the "developmentalist" thought that this (Platonic) "Socrates" lacks an interest in "Platonic" Forms and the related epistemological or metaphysical apparatus. Vlastos also helped attribute to Socrates a more-or-less Aristotelian set of ethical "paradoxes" that could be philosophically provocative, for example, his stances on weakness of will, desire for the good, and the nature of virtue and ethical knowledge. It did not hurt that Vlastos could read Socrates (as many of his predecessors did) as a model of utter rationality, the "analytic" quest after the argument at all costs, leaving aside the mystical, religious, rhetorical, and commonsensical elements equally commonly found throughout the history of Socratic reception.⁴¹

40 Consider the opening three sentences of Vlastos' "Introduction" to *The Philosophy of Socrates* (1971, 1): "The Socrates of this book is the Platonic Socrates, or, to be more precise, the Socrates of Plato's early dialogues. That this figure is a faithful and imaginative recreation of the historical Socrates is the conclusion of some very reputable scholars, though not of all. It is the conclusion I would be prepared to defend myself."

41 See Smith and Woodruff 2000 for an attempt to return some such elements into a Vlastovian framework.

This view culminated a century-and-a-half tradition of modern scholarship. The importance of Gregory Vlastos cannot be overestimated, for beyond his high-impact journal articles and books, he advised the dissertations or led the seminars of dozens of highly-placed scholars of ancient philosophy, and organized discipline-wide meetings and consulted on the creation of Ancient Philosophy graduate programs.⁴² Recent interest in the exact nature of Socratic irony, *elenchus*, and the disavowal of knowledge can be referred to his commitment to those questions. But unfamiliarity with the long history of Socratic reception, and thus over-subscription to Vlastos' program for Socratic studies, might also be referred to him. It is hoped that this study of Vlastos, and to Socratic reception from the previous 2400 years, can re-open the innumerable questions that study of Socrates allows.⁴³

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42 A moving memorial comment by Myles Burnyeat (1992) suggests that his early-career scholarship on social justice and equality, and his life-long commitment to self-examination and responsivity to criticism, could have given a personal argument for his Socratic interpretations. Vlastos' papers, archived at the University of Texas, may allow much additional study of the twentieth-century reception of Socrates; see Mourelatos 2016.

43 I thank Christopher C. Raymond for comments on this Introduction; Rawb Leon-Carlyle for help with the bibliographic formatting throughout this volume; and Ben Randolph for assistance in assembling the Index.

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PART 1

Living Reception



Greek Tragedy and the Socratic Tradition

Jacques A. Bromberg

Prolegomena

The goal of this chapter is to propose a methodology for understanding the reception of Socrates and the Socratic tradition in Greek tragedy. This is not an easy task. To begin with, there is the question of establishing what we mean by “Socrates.” The earliest mentions of his name are in Athenian Old Comedy, where he is identified as an unwashed, chattering charlatan, who (at best) concerned himself with trivial nonsense and (at worst) preyed on the minds, ambitions, and wallets of young aristocrats. But this is not the Socrates familiar to readers of Plato and Xenophon, whose loving memories of Socrates border on encomium: far from the pretentious pedant of Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, Plato’s Socrates believes himself responsible for the ethical improvement of his fellow citizens, a pursuit that he characterizes as the greatest of all possible benefits (τὴν μεγίστην εὐεργεσίαν, Pl. *Ap.* 36c4). Regardless, Classical reception studies is a field dominated by “works,” and most typically by “texts” that are selected, imitated, or reworked in some way;¹ and yet Socrates left no such texts to be “received.” Our knowledge of his cultural impact derives rather from writings by his friends and successors, beginning with Plato and Xenophon, from comic caricatures bearing the name “Socrates,” and from the large but anecdotal and untrustworthy biographical tradition.

A related problem is determining what counts as a Socratic “reception” in Greek tragedy, and (a goal of this volume) how to distinguish the reception of Socrates from the reception of Plato. Unlike authors of Old Comedy, who reveled in social commentary and mockery, Greek tragedians avoided references to current events or persons. Where then do we look for strains of Socratic doctrine, for imagery drawn from or evoking Socrates, or for stylistic echoes of his manners and methods? At the same time, one should consider where the act of reception is taking place. Is it in the mind of the tragedian (e.g., Euripides), who inserts an allusion to Socrates or to a Socratic idea into a tragic myth? In the delivery of an actor, either in an original performance

¹ Hardwick 2003, 4 n. 9, uses “text” in a broad sense, including “oral sources, written documents and works of material culture such as buildings or sculpture.”

or in some later re-performance? Or in the minds of audiences or readers (e.g., Cicero), who impart to the text of a drama some Socratic resonance? Even when tragedians appear to invoke the philosophies of the late fifth century BCE, it remains difficult to distinguish engagements with Socratic ideas from evocations of intellectual climate.² This unique combination of an individual who left no writings of his own and a genre that avoided discussing contemporary affairs makes understanding the reception of Socrates in Greek tragedy a particular challenge.

Nevertheless, it is worth doing for many reasons, chief among them, as explained above, because Socrates left no writings of his own. It should never be forgotten that some of our earliest descriptions of the man (i.e., in Aristophanes' *Clouds* and Plato's *Apology*) not only disagree, but in several places explicitly contradict one another; the more evidence we can gather from Socrates' own lifetime, therefore, the fuller a picture we will have of his ideas and their influence. Like the writers of Athenian Old Comedy, the tragedians of fifth century's final decades were Socrates' contemporaries and peers, whose engagements with Socratic philosophy are unclouded by the Platonic tradition and the *Sôkratikoî logoi*, as Aristotle called them (*Poet.* 1447b11). If their engagements could be identified and studied, they would illustrate an important initial period of Socratic receptions. Embracing these early texts and genres as sources for Socrates has potential both to enlarge our dataset significantly and to shed light on Plato's project. Plato knew the texts of Greek tragedy well and quotes frequently from Euripides, most often putting these quotations into the mouth of Socrates. The influence of the dramatists on Plato's works has been treated by scholars, especially concerning his critique of drama, his use of imagery drawn from the theater, and his adoption of the dialogue form.³ Documenting engagements with Socrates and Socratic ideas in pre-Platonic texts allows us to understand what some of the earliest Socratic receptions might have looked like, and how a literary tradition about Socrates began to take shape in the final decades of his life—and, importantly, in the years leading to Plato's decision to represent him in literary (dramatic) form. Finally, contrary to my claims that tragedy avoided contemporary references, some scholars have argued that both tragedy and comedy served as forms of

2 This particular issue becomes more fraught in the decades following Socrates' death, as the growth of Platonic literature coincides with a sharp decline in extant tragic poetry. The search for Socrates' reception in extant tragedy is therefore hindered by the lack of contemporary "Socratic" texts, while the search for post-mortem receptions is hindered by the lack of extant tragedies and the constant, mediating influence of Plato and the *Sôkratikoî logoi*.

3 Tarrant 1955; Clay 1994; Sansone 1996 (esp. 61–67, for a catalogue of Euripidean quotations in Plato).

commentary on current events.⁴ While this positivist-historicist approach to tragedy has not satisfied all, we must acknowledge the receptions taking place in the minds of readers and spectators and accept that a member of the Athenian theatrical audience could have been made to think of “Socrates” in a variety of ways. An approach to the Socratic tradition grounded in reception studies allows room for these contextual readings and historical echoes alongside the more canonical treatments of Socrates and his legacy, as we will see.

Two factors mitigate the challenge of seeking Socratic receptions in tragedy. First, the “Socratic Problem” parallels the “Homeric Question” in useful ways that shed much-needed light on the ancient reception of Socrates. Second, the sensitivity inherent in reception studies to the possibility of a dialogic relation between “text” (broadly defined) and receiver. The processes of reception are multidirectional and accretive, offering deeper understanding of both the “receiving” and the “source” texts. It is significant that Classical reception studies have evolved as an alternative approach to “the Classical Tradition,” in recognition that traditions are not simply inherited, but constantly being constructed and reconstructed.⁵ Thus, reception-based methodologies become most effective when traditions disagree, as early characterizations of Socrates often do. An approach guided by reception studies forces us to acknowledge and allows us to understand the mercurial nature of his legacy. He is therefore in many ways a figure ideally suited to be scrutinized through the lens of Classical receptions.

This chapter approaches the reception of Socrates in Greek tragedy by focusing on these issues. My first section, “Towards a ‘Diachronic’ Socrates,” concerns itself with the ancient sources for Socrates’ life and work, exploring how an “idea of Socrates” developed in a variety of contemporary contexts, and what meanings had attached themselves to his name by the end of his life. I use the figure of Homer as a foil and borrow interpretive strategies from Homeric studies that advance our understanding of a Socratic tradition-in-development. The second section, “Socrates’ Tragic Receptions,” discusses a range of possible engagements with Socrates in Athenian tragedy, particularly in relation to Euripides, with whose tragic literary vision Socrates has been most often associated.

4 E.g., Vickers 1998 and 2012.

5 Hardwick and Stray 2011; on the contrast of “tradition” and “reception,” see Hobsbaum and Ranger 1983; Hardwick 2003, 2–3.

1 Towards a “Diachronic” Socrates

My goal in this opening section is to establish a methodology by which to assimilate the conflicting accounts of Socrates’ life and activities that are preserved from his own lifetime without resorting to positivist/historicist claims of validity/historicity. I will do this by proposing a diachronic-evolutionary approach to the Socratic tradition, to complement the synchronic-historical approach that has come to be characteristic of scholarship on Socrates’ life and work. By first investigating the way in which meaning came to be attached to the name “Socrates” by his contemporaries, we will then be able to generalize more freely about possible receptions and intertexts in tragedy.

Socrates is a figure of *pure reception*. We know about him only what others have elected to record in intersecting and conflicting accounts, clouded by literary genre, academic discipline, and political context. This fact has driven not a few capable scholars to despair: “in the end,” wrote one dispirited historian of philosophy, “we can say what Socrates said of himself: we know that we know nothing.”⁶ The fact that Socrates nowhere speaks for himself lies at the heart of what has been entitled the Socratic Problem, “one of the most difficult, but also one of the most important, problems in the history of ancient philosophy.”⁷ Already a century ago the bibliography was massive, and scholars have continued to work diligently throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.⁸ These efforts have chiefly aimed at determining the authenticity—which is to say, the “historicity”—of the diverse accounts of Socrates’ life and philosophy. Yet to consider Socrates as a figure of reception requires a different approach, unencumbered by the historiographical need for a single, stable, static figure. One of the great intellectual benefits of reception studies is the freedom it offers from the rigidity that the search for a single, historical Socrates demands. But what, if not a historical Socrates, is the goal of such an approach? The answer is what I am calling a “diachronic Socrates.”

This distinction between a “diachronic” and a “synchronic” Socrates draws from Gregory Nagy’s work on Homer and the Homeric tradition, which has advocated for a diachronic-evolutionary reading of Homer informed by historical linguistics. Borrowing from Ferdinand de Saussure, Nagy has distinguished between synchrony and diachrony as denoting “respectively a

6 Joël 1921, 731. See similar resignations in Maier 1913, 1; Gigon 1947, 64; Prior 2006.

7 Patzer 1987, 4.

8 Useful surveys can be found in Gomperz 1924, 377–91; Humbert 1967; Capizzi 1969, 9–40; Rogers 1971; Patzer 1987, 1–40; Montouri 1992; Edmunds 2004; Stavru and Rosetti 2010; Dorion 2011; Waterfield 2013.

current state of a language and a phase in its evolution.”⁹ The chief advantage of demarcating “phases” of the Homeric tradition is that it allows Nagy to study the way Homeric poetry continued to evolve through the ages, and how an “idea of Homer” evolved from one period of readership to another. The Homer of Nagy’s studies is, therefore, a “historical concept ... a metonym for the text and language attributed to Homer in historical times.”¹⁰ This comparison is of course not entirely straightforward, as Socrates is “historical” in ways that Homer may not have been: his military service during the early years of the Peloponnesian War, his role in the public life of Athens after the war, and his trial and execution by the state are all matters of public record, documented by distinct, historical people who claim (and we have no reason to doubt them) to have known and spoken with him. Another more complex contrast lies in the nature of the traditions associated with Homer and Socrates respectively. In the case of “Homer,” lengthy texts are attributed to him, including not only the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but other important stories from the epic cycle as well. These positively attributed documents differ in important ways from the anecdotal nature of the Socratic tradition. Obviously, “texts” attributed to an “author” (even a metonymic author-function, as Nagy suggests) enjoy a distinct ontological status and will be subject to distinct reception processes from stories, reported conversations, and perhaps even lengthy speeches attributed to a “thinker.”

Nevertheless, despite these clear differences between the *figures* of Homer and Socrates, the Homeric and Socratic *traditions* share significant characteristics. For instance, both Homer and Socrates are first mentioned by their critics. The earliest instances of Homer’s name appear in Xenophanes (fr. 11 DK) and Heraclitus (fr. 36 DK), who clearly feel the power and influence of Homeric poetry, even if its subject matter remains only vaguely defined.¹¹ In like manner, the earliest authors to mention Socrates by name (beginning in the late 420s BCE) are comedians, in whose works “Socrates” appears as a caricature of a pompous and impoverished intellectual.¹² Analogies with the Homeric tradition help us to understand the accretive processes that produced such a diverse tradition about Socrates, and (importantly for this essay) motivates our search for Socratic receptions in tragedy. The parallel is

9 Nagy 2003, 1.

10 Nagy 2009, 3–4.

11 Graziosi 2011, 28–9.

12 Much has been written about Socrates and old comedy, which remains a vital source for evaluating his immediate cultural impact and his developing reputation: see, e.g., Brock 1990; Patzer 1994; Carey 2000; Storey 2003, 194–7 and 321–7; Konstan 2011; Capra 2018; Bromberg 2018.

most strongly suggested by the shared status of Homer and Socrates as “culture heroes” respectively of epic and philosophy. In the same way that “Homer” was both the creator of epic and the literary creation of the epic tradition, “Socrates” was both the source of inspiration for and a literary creation of an entire tradition of philosophy. Nagy explains:

It was common practice to attribute any major achievement of society, even if this achievement may have been realized only through a lengthy period of social evolution, to the episodic and personal accomplishment of a culture hero who is pictured as having made his monumental contribution in an earlier era.

NAGY 1996, 21

For this reason, Nagy cautions against thinking of “Homer” in overly personalized terms: “to say that ‘Homer wrote’ is the ultimate risk.”¹³ Students of the Socratic tradition will immediately recognize a parallel case: *to say that “Socrates thought” is the ultimate risk*. In James Porter’s words, “at issue is not a person or individual so much as the transmission, projection, and construction of one.”¹⁴ In the absence of “works” by Socrates to select and adapt, the man himself *becomes* the work, his name and reputation no less subject to the processes of reception than any texts that he might have written.

Furthermore, the analogy with Homeric criticism is already baked into Platonic criticism: “it is no coincidence,” writes Porter, “that F.A. Wolf, whose *Prolegomena to Homer* from 1795 raised the modern specter of the Homeric Question from within classical studies, was also one of the first modern classicists to address the Socratic Problem.”¹⁵ As Homerists after Wolf marshaled themselves into “Unitarian” and “Analytic” (and now, “Oralist” and “neo-Analytic”) camps, so Platonic critics have over the past two centuries pursued “Unitarian” and “Developmentalist” readings. Unitarians have argued for a single, coherent Platonic philosophy throughout the extant works. Eschewing the distinction between “Socratic” and “Platonic,” they claim that everything in Plato’s dialogues is “Platonic,” or as Charles Kahn has put it, that Plato is “a thinker with a unified worldview, consistent throughout his life.”¹⁶ By contrast, developmentalist-historicist readings group the dialogues chronologically, viewing the early dialogues as “Socratic” and the later dialogues

¹³ Nagy 1996, 21.

¹⁴ Porter 2006, 413.

¹⁵ Porter 2006, 422 n. 3.

¹⁶ Kahn 1996, xiv.

as increasingly “Platonic.”¹⁷ That is, Plato’s extant works display a variety of rhetorical approaches to the character of Socrates, who seems in different dialogues to endorse contradictory positions or to employ contrasting methods. Developmentalist-historicists view this variety as reflecting developments in Plato’s thought: “If we believe that in any given dialogue Plato puts into the persona of Socrates only what at the time he himself considers true, we must suppose that when that persona discards the *elenchus* as the right method to search for the truth this occurs because Plato has now lost faith in the method himself.”¹⁸ My diachronic-evolutionary approach to Socrates embraces aspects of both schools. The developmentalist-historicist view shares with my diachronic-evolutionary approach a “Socrates” that functions rhetorically in Plato’s texts as a figure of (admittedly mercurial) authorship and authority: for Vlastos (quoted above), Plato’s Socrates is a *persona*, a “mouthpiece.” While developmentalist-historicists presuppose the existence of and thus endeavor to identify a historical Socrates with a coherent set of views in the early dialogues, however, my own approach asks instead on what basis the authority of Plato’s “Socrates” throughout the dialogues rests. In this aspect, my diachronic approach to Socrates endorses the unitarian position that the Socrates of Plato’s dialogues is Plato’s “Socrates.” My claim is that Socrates’ rhetorical and philosophical authority in Plato and in the other Socratic writers relies in great part on a pre-existing “idea of Socrates” which, though the man himself must have contributed something to it in his final decades (and we shall never know), is largely a literary construction dating at least as far back as the 420s BCE. Plato and Xenophon and their successors contributed to and disseminated this “idea,” but they did not create it; rather, they received it, hence the particular utility of reception methodologies.¹⁹ In Nagian terms, Plato and Xenophon would represent a second “period” of Socratic criticism. Proceeding from this claim, my hypothesis is that clues to the development of this “idea” in an earlier period are available in a variety of texts from Socrates’ own lifetime, like the comedies Aristophanes and Ameipsias, who mention

17 For a canonical example of the developmentalist-historicist approach, see Vlastos 1991, esp. chs. 2–3, and critiques in Nails 1995, 53–138; Kahn 1996.

18 Vlastos 1988, 373 and 1991, 114.

19 I has occurred to me that this approach to Socrates rather resembles Plato’s theory of forms, especially concerning their knowability (as in *Cra.* 439–440, and *Resp.* 508b–509c and 516b) and their unity (as in *Phdr.* 265–266 and especially *Prm.* 128e–135d). When Socrates remarks in *Cratylus*, “how then can that which never appears in the same state be anything” (πῶς οὖν ἂν εἴη τι ἐκεῖνο ὃ μηδέποτε ὡσαύτως ἔχει, 439e1), he might be speaking of himself, as he does in *Parmenides*, “if [Zeno] demonstrates that I am one and many, what wonder is it? ... for I know that I partake of multitude” (εἰ δ’ ἐμὲ ἔν τις ἀποδείξει ὄντα καὶ πολλὰ, τί θαυμάσιον ... πλῆθους γὰρ οἶμαι μετέχω, 129c4–8).

Socrates by name; and that these early but initial and influential delineations of “Socrates” may be used not only to identify possible influences of Socratic thinking in other contemporary texts (like tragedy), but also to understand how later readers and writers received and transmitted the figure of “Socrates.”

Such an approach to the Socratic tradition has some obvious advantages. Most significantly, we gain a model for understanding the processes of reception and accretion that contributed over time to the evolution of an “idea of Socrates.” Just as the epic tradition attributed to Homer certain traits (e.g., blindness) that contributed to the authenticity of the epic, so too did the Socratic/philosophic tradition assign to Socrates certain characteristics (e.g., shoelessness, poverty, irony, the *elenchus*) that lent rhetorical power and philosophical authority to Socratic and post-Socratic philosophy. These traits and ideas, whether historical or not, nevertheless began to establish an “idea of Socrates” that could be called to mind all at once with a single word, like the verb “Socratize” (Σωκρατέω, Ar. Av. 1282; Σωκρατίζω, Alciph. 2.2), or hinted at by evoking words and phrases encoded with Socratic information.²⁰ It is important to acknowledge that such an idea of Socrates was not the product of a single moment; hence the value of a diachronic-evolutionary approach to the Socratic problem. By adopting this modality, we can disentangle the myriad Socratic texts in new ways and see them not as contrasting (requiring us to determine which are “true/accurate” and which are “false/apocryphal”) but as complementary (allowing us to treat the great diversity of Socratic texts as part of an evolving system/tradition about Socrates). At the same time, Nagy’s examination of the evolution of the Homeric tradition reveals that ancient Greek thinkers were perfectly comfortable with a certain fluidity of tradition in the lives of their culture heroes. Historians of Socratic receptions should likewise draw courage in their task from the familiarity and comfort with which Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, Plutarch, and others embraced diverse, even contrasting, biographical accounts of culture heroes like Homer, Lycurgus, Solon, and Socrates.²¹

Socrates’ *poverty* is a useful example not only because it is a point on which a majority of our earliest sources agree, but in fact because it is so unlikely to be true. Several factors indicate that Socrates was most likely relatively well-off,

20 A useful parallel is that of Anaxagoras and Euripides; see Lefkowitz 2016, 33–41.

21 E.g., the historian J.B. Bury wrote of Lycurgus that “[he] was not a man; he was only a god” (*History of Greece*, London 21913, 135); cf. the anecdote about Lycurgus and the Delphic Oracle in Herodotus 1.65, in which the oracle is “unsure whether to address [him] as man or god” (δίζω ἢ σε θεὸν μαντεύσομαι ἢ ἄνθρωπον). One might be tempted to pursue a parallel with Socrates’ story of Chaerephon at Delphi (*Ap.* 20e–21b; *Xen. Ap.* 14); in fact, Xenophon’s Socrates alludes directly to the story of Lycurgus in this context at *Ap.* 15.

enough at least to serve as a hoplite (Pl. *Ap.* 28a, *Symp.* 219e, *La.* 181b). At the same time, his marriage to the well-to-do-sounding “Xanthippe” could have brought him an ample dowry.²² Nevertheless, Socrates’ alleged poverty is a feature that has traditionally distinguished him from the wealthy Sophists, like Protagoras and Hippias (Pl. *Prt.* 262d–e), and Evenos of Paros (Pl. *Ap.* 20.b–c). His disregard for his own affairs reflects a more general indifference to the mundane concerns of everyday life that is characteristic of comic intellectuals. This characterization is reinforced in jokes beginning around 423 BCE, when Socrates appeared in a pair of comedies, *Connus* by Ameipsias and *Clouds* by Aristophanes.²³ In both plays, we find several of the *topoi* of Socratic poverty—the shabby dress, the lack of proper footwear (more below), and the malnourishment.²⁴ Two fragments of the comedian Eupolis reinforce these stereotypes (fr. 386, 395 *PCG*).²⁵ It is significant that Plato does not contradict most of the elements of this picture in his account of Socrates’ *Apology*. Only Aristophanes’ characterization of Socrates as natural philosopher comes under direct attack (*Ap.* 19c2–5), whereas Plato emphasizes Socrates’ alleged poverty at several points in the *Apology*: first, he remarks that he has neglected his own affairs and his own household in his quest to persuade the Athenians to care for virtue, refusing to accept any form of payment (31a7–c2); then he contrasts his indigence with the wealth of an equestrian victor at Olympia (36e1); and finally, he cites his inability to pay any fine (37c2–4).

Plato’s Socrates and his disciples famously wander about *shoeless*, as when Phaedrus encounters him by the city wall and says, “what luck, it seems, that I happen to be shoeless (ἀνυπόδητος), for you are always” (Pl. *Phdr.* 229a3). One of Socrates’ Athenian rivals, the sophist Antiphon in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*, scolds Socrates for his poor diet and dress, especially going about shoeless (ἀνυπόδητος) and without a tunic (ἄχιτων) (Xen. *Mem.* 1.6.2–3), and the *Symposium* provides a flurry of evidence for Socratic shoelessness: first the description of Aristodemus—a man described as “the most devoted lover of Socrates at the time” (173b3–4)—as “a small man from Kudathon, [who was] always shoeless (ἀνυπόδητος ἄει)” (173b2); then Aristodemus’ surprise to find Socrates bathed and shod (174a); and finally, Alcibiades’ description of Socrates as “hard, squalid, shoeless (ἀνυπόδητος), and homeless” (203d1), and as “moving more easily over the ice shoeless (ἀνυπόδητος) than the others

22 On the name’s upper-class ring, see Ar. *Nub.* 59–65 and discussion in Waterfield 2013, 7.

23 On *Connus*, see Carey 2000, 420–3; Bromberg 2018, 40.

24 See Ameipsias fr. 9 K-A, *PCG* 11, p. 202; Ar. *Nub.* 102–3, 177–9, 186, 362–3, 441; and Ar. *Av.* 1554.

25 Patzer 1994, 69; Storey 2003, 322–324; Bromberg 2018, 40–2.

in shoes" (220b). One could be forgiven for thinking that shoelessness was a hallmark of the Socratic disciple, as Lowell Edmunds does, calling the bare feet "the one indisputable fact about Socrates."²⁶ In fact, when Strepsiades returns unsuccessfully from Socrates' school in *Clouds*, the first thing that Pheidippides asks him is, "what have you done with your shoes, you fool?!" (*Nub.* 858). As with his poverty, Socrates' shoelessness contributed to his (self-)fashioning as a hardy intellectual, whose commitment to a life of the mind left no time for mundane concerns.

The variety of sources for Socratic shoelessness and poverty, some from Socrates' lifetime, strengthens the reports in later sources and offers a model for identifying other, perhaps less well-known, Socratic traits. Those vexed by the "Socratic Problem" may find some relief in reading that, from the perspective of Socratic receptions, it matters little whether his comic characterization, for instance, was "true" or "accurate." What matters for historians of reception is to observe an impactful and persistent idea ("myth" may not be too strong a word) being established in these texts: an "idea of Socrates" that influenced not only the inchoate Socratic tradition, but also the picture of the idealized philosopher that would evolve in the centuries to come.²⁷ In this evolutionary model, the "idea of Socrates" continued to develop in the centuries and millennia since his death, over a series of periods each characterized by the dominant influence particular authors and works, from Aristophanes, Plato, and Xenophon, to Raphael and Jacques-Louis David, to Friedrich Nietzsche and Maxwell Anderson, to *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* and *The Matrix*. The process is accretive and enduring, with each Socratic reception contributing to an evolving "idea of Socrates."

To treat Socrates seriously as a figure of receptions means accepting the proposition of a "diachronic Socrates" in essentially these terms, in contrast to a "synchronic Socrates," whose identification is the desired outcome of traditional answers to the Socratic problem. An attempt on Nagy's scale to identify and characterize the periods both in and since antiquity that have contributed to our evolving ideas about Socrates would overflow this essay, but it is a project that those interested in Socratic receptions should take seriously; and fortunately, these periods are well represented in the essays that follow in this volume. Instead, this chapter will look within the surviving tragic and para-tragic literature of the late fifth century BCE for moments that either signal a deliberate reception of a Socratic theme, or else trigger in the minds of

26 Edmunds 2004, 196. Cf. Patzer 1994, 60–7.

27 Waterfield 2013, 7, compares Plato's account of the absent-minded Thales (*Prt.* 174a).

an audience a Socratic association that the author did not necessarily intend. While such an approach grounded in receptions may not satisfy those seeking a single, coherent set of thoughts belonging to or associated with a “historical Socrates,” it does permit us to appreciate a broader range of Socratic texts, authors, and genres, including those which (like tragedy) do not explicitly mention Socrates or his intellectual heirs by name.

2 Socrates’ Tragic Receptions

In the previous section, I made the case that in the absence of any “works” *per se* by Socrates, historians of reception should nevertheless consider the texts, fragments, and testimonia about and attributed to him as part of an evolving/diachronic tradition. Using this methodology, this section will attempt to identify and discuss Socratic receptions in tragedy. Unlike old comedy, where allusions abound to current events and (in)famous Athenians, tragedy as a genre avoided any contemporary references. Nevertheless, there is some low-hanging fruit, especially in the works and fragments of Critias, Agathon, and Euripides.

Critias’ association with Socrates is so well known that it scarcely needs introducing. He is perhaps best known as one of the “Thirty Tyrants,” the oligarchic board of governors, friendly to Sparta, that ruled in Athens for eight months in 404/3 BCE after the end of the Peloponnesian War. But he features prominently in several Socratic texts, and was apparently Plato’s own great-uncle (DL 3.1). Critias is the title character of a Platonic dialogue of his own (*Critias*), written as a companion to the *Timaeus* and possibly never finished. He features prominently in the *Charmides*, a dialogue about “moderation” (σωφροσύνη), which he identifies as “taking care of one’s own business” (τὸ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν, 161b6). In Xenophon’s account of Polycrates’ anti-Socratic pamphlet, Polycrates had argued that “Alcibiades and Critias, the two disciples (ὁμιλητὰ γενομένω) of Socrates, had wrought (ἐποίησάτην) the greatest number of evils for the city” (*Mem.* 1.2.12). The two Socratic *enfants terribles* are paired in the *Protagoras*, when Critias enters Callias’ home alongside Alcibiades and “right behind” Socrates and Hippocrates (κατόπιν δὲ ἡμῶν, 316e), and the same two were sometimes seen as responsible for the charges against Socrates in 399 BCE. Aeschines wonders whether the Athenians put Socrates to death “because he was shown to be Critias’ teacher” (ὅτι Κριτίαν ἐφάνη πεπαιδευκώς, 1.173), and Vickers has argued that the *Gorgias* was, like the second book of Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* (2.1–48), Plato’s attempt to defend Socrates

from association with Critias and Alcibiades.²⁸ Nevertheless, Xenophon's Socrates seems to have fallen out with Critias, chastising him for his "servile" (ἀνελεύθερόν) and "ungentlemanly" (οὐ πρέπον ἀνδρὶ καλῶ κάγαθῶ) pursuit of Euthydemus (*Mem.* 1.2.29–30); and Critias, wishing to insult Socrates and make him unpopular, "drafted a law making it illegal to teach the art of words" (ἐν τοῖς νόμοις ἔγραψε λόγων τέχνην μὴ διδάσκειν, *Mem.* 1.2.31).

Fragments from four tragedies apparently by Critias survive (*Tennes*, *Rhadamanthys*, *Perithous*, and *Sisyphus*, 43 *TGF* 1, pp. 170–84), and some contain noteworthy philosophical sentiments. All of these quotations from the works of Critias, however, are also attributed in other sources to Euripides, and so we must proceed cautiously in crediting any of these fragments to "Critias."²⁹ Two fragments from *Perithous* (fr. 3–4, *TGF* 1, pp. 173–4) invoke cosmological theories of the Presocratics: fr. 3 describes time as "untiring, moving along its ever-flowing stream, swollen, renewing itself" (ἀκάμας τε χρόνος περὶ τ' ἀενάῳ | ῥεύματι πλήρης φοιτᾷ τίκτων | αὐτὸς ἑαυτὸν fr. 3.1–3), and fr. 4 invokes "Mind" as "the self-grown, who in the whirling aether weaves together the nature of all things" (σὲ τὸν αὐτοφυῆ, τὸν ἐν αἰθερίῳ | ῥύμβῳ πάντων φύσιν ἐμπλέξανθ' ..., fr. 4.1–2). These fragments invoke the teachings of Heraclitus (especially fr. 12, 49a, 91 DK, and test. A6 DK, from Pl. *Cra.* 402a) and Anaxagoras (especially fr. 11–12 DK), whose theorizing about "mind" attracted Socrates (*Phd.* 97b). Though not explicitly Socratic, these fragments confirm their author's engagement with contemporary scientific thinking.

Meanwhile, several other fragments from *Perithous* indicate an interest in virtue ethics, as fr. 11, "an honest character is more trustworthy than law" (τρόπος δὲ χρηστὸς ἀσφαλέστερος νόμου, fr. 11.1, *TGF* 1, p. 178); and fr. 12, which sounds distinctly Socratic, "isn't it better not to live at all than to live badly?" (οὐκ οὖν τὸ μὴ ζῆν κρείσσον ἔστ' ἢ ζῆν κακῶς; *TGF* 1, p. 178). The sentiment echoes the ethics expressed in *Crito*, "that it is not *living* that we should consider most important but *living well*" (ὅτι οὐ τὸ ζῆν περὶ πλείστου ποιητέον ἀλλὰ τὸ εὖ ζῆν 48b5–6). Fr. 17 from *Rhadamanthys* contains the most arresting articulation of ethical principles in the extant fragments:

ἔρωτες ἡμῖν εἰσὶ παντοῖοι βίου
ὁ μὲν γὰρ εὐγένειαν ἰμείρει λαβεῖν,
τῷ δ' οὐχὶ τούτου φροντίς, ἀλλὰ χρημάτων

28 Vickers 2008, 155–7. Cf. Philostratus' judgment that Critias was "the most wicked of all those men whose name[s] are notorious] for crime" (κάκιστος ἀνθρώπων ἔμοιγε φαίνεται ξυμπάντων, ὧν ἐπὶ κακίᾳ ὄνομα, *V* S 1.16).

29 Kahn 1997; O'Sullivan 2012, with bibliography; Wright 2016, 50–8 and 225–9.

πολλῶν κεκλησθαι βούλεται πατήρ δόμοις·
 ἄλλω δ' ἀρέσκει μηδὲν ὑγιὲς ἐκ φρενῶν
 λέγοντι πείθειν τοὺς πέλας τόλμῃ κακῇ·
 οἱ δ' αἰσχροὶ κέρδη πρόσθε τοῦ καλοῦ βροτῶν
 ζητοῦσιν· οὕτω βίος ἀνθρώπων πλάνη.
 ἐγὼ <δὲ> τούτων οὐδενὸς χρεῖζω τυχεῖν,
 δόξαν δὲ βουλοίμην ἂν εὐκλείας ἔχειν ...

We possess all kinds of desires in life: for one man yearns to grasp nobility, while another gives it no thought, but wishes instead to be called father of much wealth in his home. Another, speaking nothing wholesome from his heart, loves to persuade his fellows to daring crime; while other mortals still seek dishonest gains instead of virtue (πρόσθε τοῦ καλοῦ). Thus, the life of humans is prone to go astray. But I on the other hand, long to encounter none of these, but would rather have a reputation of good repute.

Fr. 17, *TGF* 1, pp. 179–80

There is much in these ten lines that might strike a listener or a reader as Socratic, but nothing more than the contrast between dishonest gains (αἰσχροὶ κέρδη) and “virtue,” here denoted by the neuter abstract τὸ καλόν. One could compare passages in Xenophon (*Mem.* 1.1.16) and Plato (*Symp.* 183d, 201e; *Grg.* 474d; *Lys.* 216c), where Socrates opposes τὸ καλόν (“virtue”) with τὸ αἰσχρόν (“shame”).

Finally, a lengthy quotation from *Sisyphus* offers an aetiological account of religion, explaining how crime had overwhelmed human society, continuing in secret even after laws had been passed to prevent it:

... τηνικαῦτά μοι δοκεῖ
 <~> πυκνὸς τις καὶ σοφὸς γνώμην ἀνήρ
 <θεῶν> δέος θνητοῖσιν ἐξευρεῖν, ὅπως
 εἴη τι δεῖμα τοῖς κακοῖσι, κἂν λάθρα
 πράσσωσιν ἢ λέγωσιν ἢ φρονῶσί <τι>.
 ἐντεῦθεν οὖν τὸ θεῖον εἰσηγήσατο,

Then finally, it seems to me, some clever man, wise in judgment, invented fear of the gods for the benefit of mortals in order that there be some terror for the wicked, even for those acting, or speaking, or plotting something in secret. Therefore in consequence, the divine element (τὸ θεῖον) was introduced.

Fr. 19.11–16, *TGF* 1, pp. 180–2

The anecdotal, mythopoietic framing of this fragment, which begins “there once was a time when human life was disordered, beastly, and subordinate to brute force” (ἦν χρόνος ὅτ’ ἦν ἄτακτος ἀνθρώπων βίος | καὶ θηριώδης ἰσχὺς θ’ ὑπηρετής, fr. 19.1–2) recalls the anecdotal framing of Socratic storytelling (e.g., Pl. *Phdr.* 237b, *Symp.* 201d, *Men.* 70a; Xen. *Mem.* 2.7.13). The fragment also shares with many intellectuals of the time (including Socrates) an epistemological interest in *aitia*, as described in *Meno* (98a) and *Phaedo* (96a–107a), and in challenging conventional religion, as Socrates is accused of doing (Pl. *Ap.* 26b–27d).

Likewise, Agathon and Euripides are closely associated with the intellectual currents of the late fifth century, so much so that they were sometimes characterized by later authors as lovers: Aelian (*HA* 6.15 and *HM* 2.21) claimed that Euripides wrote his *Chrysippus* (a tragedy about Laius’ impious infatuation with the younger Chrysippus) for Agathon, and recorded an anecdote about the two sharing a couch at Archelaus’ court in Macedonia.³⁰ Both poets lived out their final years there, and Plato appears to attack them both in the *Republic* (8.568b), as poets who flatter tyrants (τὴν τυραννίδα ἐγκωμιάζει, 568b3).³¹ At the same time, despite the fragmentary nature of Agathon’s surviving works, some scholars have sought to implicate him alongside Euripides (and, importantly, Socrates) in the genre’s *fin-de-siècle* decline, citing his innovations in music, his “Gorgianic” style, and his pretentious intellectualism;³² others have viewed Agathon’s mockery by Greek comedians (note again the similarity with Euripides and Socrates) as a sign of his importance and influence.³³ Though none of Agathon’s plays survives intact, enough is known about his work and reputation to observe hints of a dialogue with Socrates, who appears in several testimonia as a sort of spiritual and intellectual mentor.

The chief contemporary witness is, of course, Aristophanes’ comedy *Thesmophoriazusae*, from 411 BCE, which parodies Agathon’s association with Euripides in an early scene (101–265) that contains other sophistic

30 Wright 2016, 62–63. Cf. Ar. *Thesm.* 29–35.

31 Plato only names Euripides in this context, but says “this man and other poets” (οὗτος καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ποιηταί, 8.568b4). Scholars since Wilamowitz have seen this as an allusion to Agathon. However, the line attributed here by Plato to Euripides at 568b1 (σοφοὶ τυράννοι τῶν σοφῶν συνουσίῃ), which also appears at *Theages* 125b (and in a dozen other citations), seems to come from Sophocles’ *Locrian Ajax* (fr. 14 *TGF* 5.1 pp. 120–1). According to Rau’s discussion (1964, 160) of Aristophanes fr. 323 (*PCG* 111.2, p. 179), the Euripidean line read something like ἀγαθὸν τυράννοισι αἱ σοφαὶ συνουσίαι.

32 Rachet 1973, 238; Wright 2016, 61 and nn. 8–10. Nietzsche (*Birth of Tragedy* 14) implicated Agathon, alongside Euripides and “New Comedy,” in the annihilation of the chorus, which destroyed what he saw as the essence of tragedy.

33 Rau 1964, 114.

echoes.³⁴ In the opening scenes of the comedy, Agathon is twice referred to as “elegant in [his] words” (καλλιεπής, 49 and 60), a word that appears only here in Classical Greek, but seems to resemble Socrates’ approving remarks on Agathon’s “Gorgianic” peroration in the *Symposium*, which praise “the beauty of [his] words and expressions” (κάλλος τῶν ὀνομάτων καὶ ῥημάτων, 198b4–5).³⁵ Moreover, Aristophanes’ descriptions of the work of composing tragedies appear to borrow from the technical language of the trades:

κάμπτει δὲ νέας ἀψίδας ἐπῶν,
τὰ δὲ τορνεύει, τὰ δὲ κολλομελεῖ,
καὶ γνωμοτυπεῖ κἀντονομάζει
καὶ κηροχυτεῖ καὶ γογγύλλει
καὶ χοανεύει.

[Agathon] is bending new turns of phrase, turning some on the lathe, pasting together others; stamping new maxims, inventing paradoxes, molding the wax, spinning it, and casting it in a mold.

Ar. *Thesm.* 53–7

A moment later, Agathon’s work is again characterized as “bending down strophes” (κατακάμπτειν τὰς στροφάς, 68), a metaphor drawn from Agathon himself: “young men’s minds are frequently turned” (νέων γὰρ ἀνδρῶν πολλὰ κάμπτονται φρένες, fr. 26, *TGF* 1, p. 167). These metaphors not only reinforce Agathon’s reputation as an innovative and fastidious tragedian who took great care in his craft, but perhaps also allude to contemporary theories of poetry.³⁶ In the prelude to the contest between Aeschylus and Euripides in *Frogs*, for instance, we are told that “poetry will be measure by ruler (σταθμῆσεται)” (*Ran.* 798), and that Euripides is preparing a variety of carpentry tools, including “straight-edges (κανόνας) and rulers (πήλεις) of words and folding frames (πλαίσια ξύμπτυκτα) and diagonals (διαμέτρους) and wedges (σφήνας)” (*Ran.* 799–802). The metaphors reappear later in the contest, when the Chorus invokes the Muses to “witness the power of these two mouths to furnish phrases and sawdust of words (παραπρίσματ’ ἐπῶν)” (879–881); and later, when they claim that “it seems plausible to expect one [of the poets] to say something

34 In making this argument, I follow Roberts 1900 and Muecke 1982 in assuming that much of the scene in *Thesmophoriazousae* drew directly from, and hence alludes directly to, Agathon’s works.

35 Muecke 1982, 44; Wright 2016, 70 and n. 41.

36 Denniston 1927, 114; Muecke 1982, 44–6.

urbane and filed to a point" (προσδοκᾶν οὖν εἰκός ἐστι | τὸν μὲν ἀστεϊόν τι λῆξιν | καὶ κατερρινημένον, 900–902).³⁷ Plato's Socrates applies the language of craft in the *Phaedrus*, when he uses the verb κολλᾶω ("glue, join, cement") to denigrate the work of poets and rhetoricians (278e1), but also draws comparisons with the trades frequently, alluding specifically to carpentry in (e.g.) *Gorgias* (460b and 500e–501a), *Cratylus* (389b), and *Philebus* (56a–c).³⁸

Naturally, Plato's *Symposium* is the other chief witness, which opens with Agathon's impatient but deferential welcome of Socrates (175c–d), and closes as Socrates forces Agathon and Aristophanes "to agree that it was possible for one man to have the knowledge (ἐπιστασθαι) to write both tragedy and comedy—and indeed, that one who composed tragedies artfully (τέχνη) could also compose comedies" (223d). This conversation between philosopher, tragedian, and comedian has been understood as a key to reading the dialogue as a whole;³⁹ but Agathon's affection for Socrates is evident throughout the dialogue, and as others have noted, we have no reason to believe that Plato invented it.⁴⁰ Xenophon's Socrates, too, is familiar with Agathon and his long-time lover, Pausanias (Xen. *Symp.* 8.32).⁴¹

Agathon's characterization by Aristophanes and Plato as a pretentious, intellectual *bon vivant* is corroborated by his extant fragments, which contain many Socratic and Sophistic themes and ideas. The theme of love, for instance, so intimately related to Plato's *Symposium*, appears in two fragments from unknown plays. Fr. 29 describes love's sudden onset, "for love comes upon humankind through the act of viewing" (ἐκ τοῦ γὰρ ἐσορᾶν γίγνεται ἄνθρωποις ἐρᾶν, fr. 29 *TGF* 1, p. 167). Of course, the idea that love and sexual desire manifest through vision is a poetic commonplace, appearing in the first *stasimon* of Euripides' *Hippolytus*, which opens "Love, Love, who drips desire down upon [the] eyes ..." ("Ἔρως Ἔρως, ὁ κατ' ὀμμάτων | στάζων πόθον, 525–6), as well as in Sophocles (e.g., *Tr.* 107) and Aeschylus (*PV* 654). Yet the Euripidean ode, and the line from Agathon as well, seem in dialogue with Socrates' description of love in his long second speech in the *Phaedrus* (esp. 250d3–255d6), which also emphasizes the primacy of vision. Socrates describes the physical and emotional effects that result, "when one sees a godlike face or some type of figure

37 Cf. Ar. *Eq.* 461–71 for another striking example.

38 Nightingale 1996, 54–9.

39 Clay 1975; Usher 2002.

40 Lévêque 1955, 44.

41 Cf. Pl. *Prt.* 315e, Wright 2016, 62–3. The passage in question is closely related to Pl. *Symp.* 178e–179b3. Lévêque 1955, 48–53, discusses at length Agathon's unusually devoted and lasting relationship with Pausanias.

that imitates beauty well" (ὅταν θεοειδὲς πρόσωπον ἴδῃ κάλλος εὖ μεμιμημένον ἢ τινα σώματος ιδέαν, *Phdr.* 251a3–4), and then concludes, "and this passion, my beautiful boy, to which my speech [is directed], men call 'love'" (τοῦτο δὲ τὸ πάθος, ὦ παῖ καλέ, πρὸς ὃν δὴ μοι ὁ λόγος, ἄνθρωποι μὲν ἔρωτα ὀνομάζουσιν, 251b1–3). Moreover, the scene between Phaedra and her Nurse that comes before the choral ode to Eros shares a Socratic interest in definition: "What is this thing humans call 'to love'?" (τί τοῦθ' ὃ δὴ λέγουσιν ἄνθρώπους ἐρᾶν; 347), using nearly the same phrase as Agathon at the line-end of fr. 29.⁴²

Moreover, Plato also indirectly associates his Agathon with Euripides in the *Symposium* by having him quote a memorable Euripidean phrase: "everyone whom Love touches becomes a poet, 'even one previously unrefined'" (πᾶς γοῦν ποιητὴς γίγνεται, "κἂν ἄμουσος ἦ τὸ πρὶν," οὗ ἂν Ἔρως ἄψηται, *Symp.* 196e2–3 = Eur. *Sthenoboea* fr. 663, *TGF* 5.2, pp. 652–3). The quote was memorable enough for Aristophanes to parody it when Agathon complains that "it is so unrefined to see a poet who is boorish and hairy" (ἄλλως τ' ἄμουσόν ἐστι ποιητὴν ιδεῖν | ἀγρεῖον ὄντα καὶ δασύν, *Thesm.* 159–60), a subtle swipe at Euripides who moments later describes himself as "grizzled and bearded" (πολιός εἰμι καὶ πώγων ἔχω, 190). Agathon's obsession with careful self-presentation is explained in terms of his poetic ambitions: "it is vital that a poet adopt the same manners as the dramas he must write" (χρὴ γὰρ ποιητὴν ἄνδρα πρὸς τὰ δράματα | ἃ δεῖ ποιεῖν πρὸς ταῦτα τοὺς τρόπους ἔχειν, 149–50); this explains his praise of Phrynichus, who "was elegant and dressed elegantly, and for this reason his dramas were also elegant" (165). Agathon concludes, "for one must necessarily create according to [one's] nature" (ὁμοία γὰρ ποιεῖν ἀνάγκη τῇ φύσει, 167). The sentiment resembles Socratic notions of *phusis* as expressed in the *Republic* where Socrates repeatedly associates nature with craft (e.g., 370a–b, 453b–c), and receives some confirmation from Agathon fr. 21: "laborious natures seek out their own ways" (ιδίᾳς ὁδοὺς ζητοῦσι φιλόπονοι φύσεις, *TGF* 1, p. 166).

Finally, Agathon shares with Plato's Socrates (and other sophists) an interest in etymology. In the sole surviving fragment of his *Thyestes*, one of the unsuccessful suitors of Amphithea says:

κόμας ἐχειράμεσθα μάρτυρας τρυφῆς,
 ἦ που ποθεινὸν χρῆμα παιζούσῃ φρενί.
 ἐπώνυμον γοῦν εὐθύς ἐσχομεν κλέος,
 Κούρητες εἶναι, κουρίμου χάριν τριχός

42 Cf. also the corrupt fr. 3: ὕβριν ἢ <Κύ>πριν | †μισθῶ ποθέν ἢ μόχθον πατριδῶν† (*TGF* 1, p. 167); Roberts 1900, 48–9.

We have cropped short our hair, witnesses of our fastidiousness, something desirable to a playful mind. And right away we achieved an eponymous fame, to be [known as] “Kouretes”, on account of our shorn (κουρίμου) hair.

Fr. 3, *TGF* 1, p. 162

As Wright has observed, several contemporary thinkers took an interest in such etymological wordplay, including Protagoras, Antiphon, and Prodicus, beside whom Agathon and Pausanias are lying in Plato's *Protagoras* (315e).⁴³ Elsewhere, Agathon expresses interest in other hot philosophical topics of his day, including the nature of “judgment” (γνώμη, fr. 27), “wisdom” (σοφὸν, fr. 19; σοφία, fr. 25), and “intellect” (φρένες, fr. 26), and the argument from probability (fr. 9).

These brief surveys of Socratic themes in the fragments of Critias and Agathon illustrates the limitations of reception methodologies when working with fragments in particular, and it need hardly be said that a fuller account of their engagement with Socratic philosophy would have been possible if more of their work had survived. Nevertheless, we can recognize philosophically significant themes in the fragments of their tragedies, including much that seems to anticipate aspects of Plato's and Xenophon's characterizations of Socratic ideas. What is especially important to recognize, however, is the way in which their well-known status as Socrates' students and associates may have affected the reception of their drama: so if Critias wrote that “some clever man, wise in judgment, invented fear of the gods” (fr. 19.12–13), or when Agathon wrote that “young men's minds are frequently turned” (νέων γὰρ ἀνδρῶν πολλὰ κάμπτονται φρένες, fr. 26) and “judgment is stronger than the strength of hands” (γνώμη δὲ κρείσσον ἐστὶν ἢ ῥώμη χειρῶν, fr. 27), the Athenian audience was developing their ideas of Socrates—*whether or not Socrates actually taught these principles!*

Among the extant tragedians tied with the Socratic tradition, Euripides is by far the best represented. As in Agathon's case, Euripides' affinity with Socrates originates in Old Comedy: “it is Aristophanes' comic portraits of Euripides, however exaggerated and however far from reality, which have formed the basis of all subsequent attempts to write an account of Euripides' life.”⁴⁴ Throughout his comedies, Aristophanes mocked and parodied the pretentious intellectualism of Euripidean tragedy in much the same way and for many of

43 Wright 2016, 73 and (on *Thyestes* fr. 3) 84; Roberts 1900, 47.

44 Lefkowitz 2016, 26.

the same reasons that he mocked and parodied Socrates in *Clouds* and *Birds*.⁴⁵ In fact, Euripides and Socrates appear together in a well-known passage of *Frogs* (1491–9), where Socrates is blamed for Euripides' neglect of tragic artistry; and the overall picture of Socrates exerting a profound influence on Euripidean tragedy is reinforced by other comic testimonia attributed to Aristophanes (fr. 392 *PCG*), Telecleides (fr. 41 *PCG*), and Callias (fr. 15 *PCG*). Dionysius of Halicarnassus (9.11) reports that Euripides abandoned Anaxagoras' school for Socrates', and Aulus Gellius (*NA* 15.20.4) also lists Socrates among Euripides' teachers.

A more challenging series of testimonia is the biography of Euripides by the Peripatetic Satyrus, preserved in several papyrus fragments (*POxy.* 1176), and apparently framed as a dialogue between Satyrus and a certain Diodora Eukleia (or perhaps, Diodorus and Eukleia).⁴⁶ Citing a wide variety of Euripidean passages, Satyrus discusses Euripides' relationships with intellectuals, including Anaxagoras (fr. 37 col. 1.22–fr. 38 col. 1), and Socrates. Satyrus fr. 38 col. 4 (= fr. 39 col. 1) claims that Euripides earned public scorn for admiring Socrates so much that, when he described greed (*πλεονεξία*) in his *Danae*, he claimed that Socrates was the only man not stirred by that desire. Fr. 325 from *Danae* (*TGF* 5.1, p. 457 = Stob. 3.10.18 W) seems to be the passage in question: “no man is born able to resist money (*κρείσσων ... χρημάτων*), unless there is someone, but who this is I cannot see.” Metrical analysis has suggested an early date for *Danae*, anywhere from 455–425 BCE, but the later part of this possible range overlaps with the period before Delium and the comedies of 423 BCE, when Socrates was not yet a well-known figure in Athens. Even given Socrates' notorious poverty (see above), it is hard to imagine how such a sentiment might be linked to him by an audience who had not yet seen Ameipsias' *Connus*, Aristophanes' *Clouds*, or Eupolis' *Flatterers*. Nevertheless, several Euripidean dramas from this period seem engaged with themes and ideas associated with Socrates, and it would not be impossible that Euripides was addressing Socrates indirectly in this passage, or for the amusement of a few *cognoscendi*. A related testimonium in Satyrus' biography, fr. 39 col. 2, also invokes Socratic thinking. One speaker in Satyrus' dialogue cites two verses from an unknown Euripidean tragedy (fr. 39 col. 2.8–14 = fr. 1007c *TGF*), in which one character asks another, “but if these things are done in secret, whom do you fear?” and the other replies, “the gods, who see far better than humans.” Satyrus' interlocutor then observes that such an idea of divine omniscience could be described as “Socratic” (Εἴη δὲ ἢ τοιαύτη ὑπόνοια περὶ θεῶν [Σω]κρατική, fr. 39 col. 2.15–18). The reading

45 Nightingale 1995, 63–4; Wildberg 2006, 25–6; Olson 2007, 227–8.

46 Patzer 1988, 34–8.

is in part reinforced by two passages in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* that discuss the omniscience of the gods: "Socrates believed that the gods know all things, whether spoken, done, or planned in secret" (Σωκράτης δὲ πάντα μὲν ἡγείτο θεοὺς εἰδέναι, τὰ τε λεγόμενα καὶ πραττόμενα καὶ τὰ σιγῇ βουλευόμενα, 1.1.19), and "you will recognize that the divine is so great and of such a kind as to see all and hear all and be all present and attend to all things" (γνώσει τὸ θεῖον ὅτι τοσοῦτον καὶ τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν ὥσθ' ἅμα πάντα ὁρᾶν καὶ πάντα ἀκούειν καὶ πανταχοῦ παρεῖναι καὶ ἅμα πάντων ἐπιμελεῖσθαι [αὐτούς], 1.4.18). Even if we are hamstrung in our attempt to identify explicit Socratic references here, the receptions are significant in illustrating the sorts of associations that can emerge in the minds of readers, even many generations after a play's original performance.

These passages paint a picture, which appears to have been widely accepted in antiquity, of Euripides' active association with Socrates and his ideas. Moreover, the feeling seems to have been mutual: according to an anecdote in Aelian (*VH* 2.13), Socrates never attended the theater, except when Euripides produced a new play. The opening lines of Euripides' *Orestes* present a useful case: "There is no tale so terrible to describe, no suffering nor god-sent disaster whose burden humankind may not have to bear" (Οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν δεινὸν ᾧδ' εἰπεῖν ἔπος | οὐδὲ πάθος οὐδὲ ξυμφορὰ θεήλατος, | ἧς οὐκ ἂν ἄραιτ' ἄχθος ἀνθρώπου φύσις, 1–3). Cicero reports that Socrates approved of these verses and asked that they be repeated:

cum *Orestem* fabulam doceret Euripides, primos tris versus revocasse dicitur Socrates: "Neque tam terribilis ulla fando oratio est, | Nec fors nec ira caelitem invectum malum, | Quod non natura humana patiendo ecferat."

When Euripides was producing his play *Orestes*, Socrates is said to have called for the repetition of the opening three verses: "There is no story so terrible to tell, no accident nor evil invoked by heavenly wrath, that human nature cannot with patience endure."

Cic. *Tusc.* 4.63

Cicero thinks of Socrates as ideal member of Euripides' audience, identifying and calling for the repetition of a philosophically valuable idea in *Orestes*.⁴⁷ But it is worth noting how Cicero changes (or perhaps misreads) the meaning

47 Wildberg 2006, 24; Audano 2008, 73–5; cf. the contrasting story (DL 2.33) that Socrates left the theater in protest during a performance of one of Euripides' plays, upon hearing the line "best to let her wander at will" (κράτιστον εἰκῇ ταῦτ' εἶναι ἀφειμένον). The line is

of the original Euripidean sentiment: where Euripides' *Electra* stresses the great variety of possible human suffering, Cicero chooses to make the passage about human endurance for suffering.⁴⁸ The passage illustrates the sort of alteration that received texts may undergo in the hands of future readers, and demonstrates the potential for an authoritative "idea of Socrates" to generate new knowledge and new meanings in the minds of subsequent generations of readers.

Nevertheless, there seems to be sufficient evidence at least to take seriously the proposition that certain late fifth century tragic Athenian dramatists were in dialogue with Socratic thought. But how do we distinguish association with Socrates and his ideas in the plays and fragments from a general interest in contemporary intellectual questions and debates? Some of the philosophical issues at work in the tragedies—the teachability (or not) of virtue, the powers of persuasion, the nature of the divine—surely interested various contemporary thinkers, though their opinions no doubt diverged widely; and outside of the Platonic tradition, one cannot always easily separate Socratic from Sophistic ideas. Euripidean scenes, expressions, and characters have been associated with a number of recognizable Sophists, and one conservative answer would be that perhaps Euripides did not make as sharp a distinction between their views and Socrates as (e.g.) Plato did.⁴⁹ Still, given what we know of Euripides' and Agathon's relationships with Socrates in particular, it seems worthwhile to identify as best we can recognizable Socratic *topoi*, attested during Socrates' lifetime, that may have evoked an image of Socrates in the minds of an ancient theater-going public. Certainly, not every Socratic *topos* will be observable in extant tragedy. Some of his most famous characteristics, like his infamous poverty and shoelessness, though well-attested in Socrates' lifetime, are all but absent from the genre.⁵⁰ So, what noteworthy terms, phrases, images, practices, or ideas from/about Socrates can we recognize in tragic poetry of the late fifth century BCE?

Most obviously, perhaps, several Euripidean characters articulate *criticisms of political rhetoric* that closely resemble the attitude of Plato's Socrates.⁵¹

attributed by Diogenes to *Auge* (*TGF* 5.1, p. 335), but appears in the extant text of *Electra* (379) and may be an interpolation.

48 Willink 1986 ad loc.

49 Conacher 1998, 12, makes this valuable point. Cf. Winnington-Ingram 1969; Allan 1999–2000.

50 Though it is worth noting that Euripides was apparently famous for presenting tragic heroes in rags: *EL* 184–5, *Hel.* 420–4, and parodies by Aristophanes in *Ach.* 410–79, *Ra.* 842 and 1063–4, and *Thesm.* 910; cf. *Soph. Phil.* 273–4.

51 Conacher 1981; 1998, ch. 4.

In the *Gorgias*, for example, we see that by flattering the people, orators put themselves in a position to do all sorts of harm: Polus asks, as though it were a good thing, “can they not, like tyrants (ὥσπερ οἱ τύραννοι), murder whomever they like, and confiscate property, and exile from the cities whomever occurs to them?” (466b11–c2). The sentiment is echoed in the *Philebus*, when Protarchus quotes Gorgias, “that persuasion differs greatly from all the arts in that all things are willingly made slaves under it, not through any violence” (ὥς ἡ τοῦ πείθειν πολὺ διαφέρει πασῶν τεχνῶν, πάντα γὰρ ὑφ’ αὐτῇ δοῦλα δι’ ἐκόντων ἀλλ’ οὐ διὰ βίας ποιοῖτο, 58a7–b2). In the *Menexenus*, Socrates ironically describes the effects of encomiastic rhetoric (235a6–c5): hearing himself and his city praised by the eulogists, Socrates feels “taller and nobler and handsomer” (μειζων καὶ γενναιότερος καὶ καλλίων, 235b2), and when he is listening with foreigners, he feels “more worthy of [their] respect” (σεμνότερος 235b4). Fr. 11 attributed to “Critias” takes this criticism a step farther: “an honest character is more trustworthy than law; the former, no rhetorician could ever twist, whereas the latter he might corrupt, throwing it into disorder up and down with his words” (τρόπος δὲ χρηστὸς ἀσφαλέστερος νόμου· | τὸν μὲν γὰρ οὐδεὶς ἂν διαστρέψαι ποτὲ | ῥήτωρ δύναιτο, τὸν δ’ ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω | λόγοις ταρασσῶν πολλάκις λυμαίνεται, *TGF* 1, p. 178). In Euripides’ *Suppliants* (423 BCE), we find an *agôn* between Theseus and the Theban herald over the relative merits of monarchy and democracy: “you have begun your speech falsely, stranger,” begins Theseus, “in seeking a tyrant here: for this city is not governed by a single man, but is free” (403–405). The herald’s response is a critique of democracy familiar from Plato, citing first the instability that results from demagoguery (412–16), then the inability of “poor farmers” (γαπόνος δ’ ἀνὴρ πένης, 420) even when educated to run a government, and finally the dangers when “worthless men are esteemed” (ὅταν πονηρὸς ἀξιῶμ’ ἀνὴρ ἔχῃ, 424). The debate, as Conacher notes, “reads almost like a set piece from a rhetorician’s school.”⁵² Moreover, the play’s first performance in 423 BCE makes it contemporary with Aristophanes’ *Clouds* and Ameipsias’ *Connus*, two comedies featuring Socrates that indicate his growing notoriety.⁵³ Many other Euripidean contexts emphasize the danger of misused rhetoric: in *Hippolytus* (428 BCE), Phaedra resists her Nurse’s clever scheming, and pronounces instead that “words too beautiful (οἱ καλοὶ λίαν λόγοι) destroy well-managed cities and homes of mortals” (486–487); and her opinion is reinforced later by Hippolytus himself who, defending himself against Theseus’ accusations, claims that “those of little account among the wise are often [deemed] by the multitude more skillful speakers” (οἱ γὰρ ἐν

52 Conacher 1981, 24–5.

53 Bromberg 2018; Capra 2018.

σοφοῖς | φαῦλοι παρ' ὅχλῳ μουσικώτεροι λέγειν, 988–9). The sentiment reappears throughout *Hecuba*, in the title character's diatribe against demagogues: “A thankless breed, those who pursue a speaker's honors (δημηγόρους τιμάς). If only you were unknown to me, [you] who don't hesitate to harm your friends, if only you might speak some word to the pleasure of the crowd” (254–7);⁵⁴ and later, when her appeal to Agamemnon has failed, she invokes “persuasion, humankind's only tyrant” (πειθῶ δὲ τὴν τύραννον ἀνθρώποις μόνην, 816). In *Orestes*, we find the same opinion neatly stated: “when someone, sweet in [his] words, but harboring wicked thoughts, persuades the multitude, it is a great evil for the city” (ὅταν γὰρ ἡδύς τις λόγοις φρονῶν κακῶς | πείθῃ τὸ πλῆθος, τῇ πόλει κακὸν μέγα, 907–13). Finally, the theme reappears in Euripides' *Bacchae*, where Teiresias spells it out clearly to Pentheus:

ὅταν λάβῃ τις τῶν λόγων ἀνὴρ σοφὸς
καλὰς ἀφορμάς, οὐ μέγ' ἔργον εὖ λέγειν·
σὺ δ' εὐτροχὸν μὲν γλῶσσαν ὡς φρονῶν ἔχεις,
ἐν τοῖς λόγοισι δ' οὐκ ἔνεισί σοι φρένες.
θράσει δὲ δυνατὸς καὶ λέγειν οἶός τ' ἀνὴρ
κακὸς πολίτης γίγνεται νοῦν οὐκ ἔχων.

When some wise man makes a good beginning in his speaking, it is no great task to speak well. You have a glib tongue, as though you had sense, but you have no sense in your words. A man powerful in his insolence, able to speak [well] becomes a bad citizen, if he doesn't have a brain.

Eur. *Bacch.* 266–71

The phrasing resembles Socrates' complaint about encomiastic oratory in *Menexenus*: “when someone argues among those very ones whom he is also praising, it is no great task to seem to speak well” (ὅταν δέ τις ἐν τούτοις ἀγωνίζηται οὐσπερ καὶ ἐπαινεῖ, οὐδὲν μέγα δοκεῖν εὖ λέγειν, 235d5–6). It is worth emphasizing not only the number of Euripidean dramas in which this theme appears, but also their chronological span from the early 420s (*Hippolytus*, *Suppliants*) to the end of Euripides' career over two decades later (*Orestes*, *Bacchae*). While some early plays (especially *Hippolytus* and *Medea*) have been deemed most in dialogue with Socratic themes and ideas, it would be a mistake to think of this dialogue a transitional phase during a single period in Euripides' long career.

One of the Platonic Socrates' boldest and most controversial ideas, the *theory of continence*, appears to be in dialogue with Euripidean dramas from around

54 Conacher 1981, 19–22; 1998, 58–64.

430 BCE.⁵⁵ The clearest articulation and discussion of incontinence occurs in *Protagoras* (352d4–7): “you know,” says Socrates, “that many people will not be persuaded by you and me, but will confess that many, despite knowing what is best (γινώσκοντας τὰ βέλτιστα), refuse to do it, though it is possible for them, but do other things instead.” Although the majority of people seem to believe this, Socrates argues that incontinence is impossible, a claim which Aristotle (*NE* 7.1145b) credits to Socrates alone. In fact, Aristotle cites Sophocles’ tragedy *Philoctetes* as an example of “a sort of useful incontinence” (τις σπουδαία ἀκρασία, *NE* 7.1146a19): Neoptolemos “is to be praised for not abiding what he was persuaded by Odysseus [to do], because of his grief at telling a lie” (ἐπαινέτος γὰρ οὐκ ἐμμένων οἷς ἐπείσθη ὑπὸ τοῦ Ὀδυσσέως διὰ τὸ λυπεῖσθαι ψευδόμενος, *NE* 7.1146a20–21).⁵⁶ Several Euripidean passages seem to reject the Socratic view explicitly.⁵⁷ The earliest and clearest of these is in *Medea*, a play dated to 431 BCE. As the play reaches its climax, Medea’s intent to murder her children wavers: “what shall I do? My purpose is gone ...” (τί δράσω; καρδία γὰρ οἴχεται, 1042). She bids farewell to her plans (χαίρετω βουλευμάτα, 1044 and 1048), but then remembers the mockery she would endure should her enemies escape unpunished (1049–50), and immediately recovers her intention: “these things must be done” (τολμητέον τάδ’, 1051).⁵⁸ She then blames and rebukes her *thumos* for setting her on the destructive course (1056–8; cf. 1079), but no longer deviates from it: “I even know what sorts of evils I am intending to do, but [my] desire (θυμός) is stronger than my reasoning ...” (καὶ μανθάνω μὲν οἶα δρᾶν μέλλω κακά, | θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσω τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων ..., 1078–9). Medea’s line of thought, and especially her identification of desire as her motivating emotion, resembles what Socrates claims many people believe, that “though often a person has knowledge (ἐπιστήμης), that knowledge (τὴν ἐπιστήμην) does not rule him, but rather something else, sometimes desire (θυμόν), something pleasure (ἡδονήν), sometimes grief (λύπην), other times love (ἔρωτα), and often fear (φόβον) ...” (*Prt.* 352b5–8). As Irwin puts it, “if Euripides intends to describe incontinence here, he does it well.”⁵⁹ Euripides’ *Hippolytus* offers another example. At 358–9, Phaedra’s Nurse laments, “even prudent people—they are

55 On the incontinence (*akrasia*) in Greek philosophy, see Bobonich and Destrée 2007.

56 *Soph. Phil.* 54–112 and 895–916.

57 Moline 1975; Solmsen 1975, 132; Irwin 1983; Patzer 1988, 39–45; Conacher 1998, 26–7 and 35–6; Wildberg 2006, 27–30.

58 Cf. more imagined mockery at *Med.* 404. A similar moment occurs at the climax of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus*, when Oedipus, on the point of discovering the truth, recognizes that it will destroy him, but presses on: “it must be heard” (ἀλλ’ ὅμως ἀκουστέον, 1170).

59 Irwin 1983, 192.

unwilling, but [do it] nevertheless—desire what is wicked” (οἱ σῶφρονες γάρ, οὐχ ἐκόντες ἀλλ’ ὅμως, | κακῶν ἐρώσι). In the scene that follows, Phaedra echoes this language, rationalizing her desire for her stepson Hippolytus: “we know and recognize what is good, but we do not perform it, some out of laziness, others preferring some other pleasure to the noble” (τὰ χρήστ’ ἐπιστάμεσθα καὶ γινώσκομεν, | οὐκ ἐκπονοῦμεν δ’, οἱ μὲν ἀργίας ὕπο, | οἱ δ’ ἡδονὴν προθέντες ἀντὶ τοῦ καλοῦ | ἄλλην τιν’, 380–3). The similarity to the discussion in *Protagoras* is striking, especially the contrast between pleasure (ἡδονήν) and the good (τὰ χρήστ’). Barrett cautions not to read a philosophical polemic against Socrates into these lines: “the similarity of language is no more than one would expect in two straightforward statements of a very straightforward view.”⁶⁰ Yet, his evidence for this common opinion is another passage from Euripides’ *Medea* 1078–9 (above), and some Euripidean fragments (discussed below). It is indeed prudent not to attribute these opinions to Euripides himself—it is rather his characters who make these arguments; but these characters nevertheless appear to frame their opinions in strikingly philosophical language.

Besides these extant plays, several of the extant fragments deserve consideration, beginning with two attributed to Euripides’ *Chrysippus* (*TGF* 5.1, pp. 877–84): “My nature compels me, though I have judgment” (γνώμην δ’ ἔχοντά μ’ ἢ φύσις βιάζεται, fr. 840), and “alas, this god-sent evil upon mankind, when one knows the good, but does not perform it” (αἰαί, τόδ’ ἤδη θεῖον ἀνθρώποις κακόν, | ὅταν τις εἰδῇ τὰγαθόν, χρῆται δὲ μή, fr. 841). Both are cited by Plutarch (*Mor.* 446a) in his discussion of incontinence, and Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 2.63–4) credits fr. 840 to Laius. Meanwhile, fr. 220 from *Antiope* restates the same theme: “many mortals suffer from this evil: though thinking, they are unwilling to do service to their judgment” (πολλοὶ δὲ θνητῶν τοῦτο πάσχουσιν κακόν· | γνώμῃ φρονοῦντες οὐ θέλουσ’ ὑπηρετεῖν). Plato knew this play well, quoting from it at several well-known points in the *Gorgias*,⁶¹ and so the question remains whether Euripides is here responding to a Socratic thesis, or whether Plato has his “Socrates” argue against a popular tragic theme; but it remains a noteworthy point of contact between Euripidean tragedy and the early Socratic tradition.⁶²

The distinctive interrogative method of the Platonic Socrates, the process of “cross-examination” commonly known as the *elenchus*, also appears in

60 Barrett 1964 ad. 377–81.

61 Dodds 1959 ad. 484e–486c; Nightingale 1992; Nightingale 1995, 69–87; Sansone 1996, 41–2.

62 I do not have space to discuss adequately the notable use of “do service” (ὑπηρετεῖν) in *Antiope* fr. 220; but Wildberg 2002 has connected this word with an understanding of piety that occurs in a variety of Euripidean and Socratic texts.

dialogue with certain early Euripidean scenes. Plato connects the interrogative process with Socrates' desire to unmask pretense and ignorance in the belief that false convictions are a barrier to human happiness. The process is described and demonstrated in many places, its origins traced in Plato's *Apology* (20e6–21b9) to an oracle that declared no one wiser than Socrates (21a5–7). Socrates explains how, hoping to “put the oracle to the test” (ἐλέγξων τὸ μαντεῖον, 21c1), he approached “one of those with a reputation for wisdom” (ἐπὶ τινὰ τῶν δοκούντων σοφῶν εἶναι, 21b9), and discovered “that [this man] deemed himself wise, but in fact was not” (ὅτι οἷοιτο μὲν εἶναι σοφός, εἴη δ' οὐ, 21c8). A similar formulation appears in *Sophist* (231b5–8), where the Stranger suggests that “the refutation of the empty conceit of wisdom” (ὁ περὶ τὴν μάταιον δοξοσοφίαν γιγνόμενος ἔλεγχος) is in fact “the true-born art of sophistry” (ἡ γένει γενναία σοφιστική); and Alcibiades memorably describes its irresistible effects in the *Symposium*, recalling how Socrates “compels me to agree that I'm terribly deficient and have no care for myself” (216a4–6).⁶³ In the *Gorgias*, Socrates contrasts Polus' “rhetorical” means of refutation (ῥητορικῶς γὰρ με ἐπιχειρεῖς ἐλέγχειν, 471e2) with his own manner (472c4), which Callicles ridicules later in the dialogue (491a1–3). A similar style of interrogation appears in a key scene of Euripides' *Hippolytus*, where the word (ἔλεγχος) appears six times—twice as often in any other single play. First, when the chorus asks Phaedra's Nurse what ails her mistress, she replies, “After questioning (ἐλέγχουσ') [her], I do not know, for she refuses to tell” (271); then, the Nurse encourages Phaedra to speak, saying “You should not remain silent, child, but either refute me (ἢ μ' ἐλέγχειν), if I say something base or else agree to accept words well spoken” (297–299). In fact, in the discussion that follows, the Nurse asks a series of probing questions (310, 316, 318, 320, 322, etc.) leading Phaedra to confess her love for Hippolytus. In another example, from the end of *Bacchae*, Cadmus coaxes his daughter Agave out of her divine madness with a series of leading questions in a brief elenctic exchange: “you will suffer terrible grief (ἀλγήσεται ἄλγος δεινόν) when you come to understand (φρονήσασαι) what you have done,” he begins, “but if you remain until the end of your life in this state, in which you are now, though not exactly lucky, you will not know the depth of your misfortune (οὐκ εὐτυχοῦσαι δόξετ' οὐχὶ δυστυχεῖν)” (1259–62). Cadmus' conception subverts the contrast in Plato's cave allegory between the man who is freed from the cave and recognizes his happiness (εὐδαιμονίζειν, *Resp.* 7.516c6; εὐδαιμονίσειεν, 518b1) and the prisoners who would rather kill him than abandon their illusion (517a4–6). Perhaps understandably, Cadmus considers Agave's maddened ignorance preferable to the knowledge that she has murdered and dismembered her

63 Belfiore 1980, 134, cites this passage as part of an argument linking the *elenchus* to forms of magic and cathartic ritual.

child. Nevertheless, he proceeds to question her in a manner that strikingly resembles aspects of Plato's cave allegory, asking her first to "look up at the sky" (ἐς τόνδ' αἰθέρ, 1264) and then whether it looks the same to her, or has undergone some change (μεταβολάς, 1266). As in the cave allegory (cf. the analogy of the sun at *Resp.* 507e), looking at the sunlight of Thebes has brought Agave out of her deluded state: "I somehow feel sensible (ἔννους)," she exclaims, "altered (μετασταθεῖσα) from my former state of mind (τῶν πάρος φρενῶν)" (1269–70). Cadmus continues with a series of questions about her family, before asking her to re-examine whose head she holds in her hands: "now look correctly; only a slight effort is needed to see" (σκέψαι νυν ὀρθῶς: βραχὺς ὁ μόχθος εἰσιδεῖν, 1279). Unlike Phaedra's Nurse, whose questions aim to provoke Phaedra into revealing the origin of her sickness, Cadmus' interrogation of Agave aims at restoring her senses and self-knowledge, a final Socratic *topos* to which we will turn next.

According to Plato's account in *Apology*, Socrates developed his manner of interrogation and refutation after the Delphic Oracle proclaimed something about him that he felt was false. Thus, it is no surprise that the pursuit of *self-knowledge* comes to be a central concern of Socratic texts. In fact, like poverty and shoelessness, self-knowledge is a Socratic theme that appears in a wide variety of authors and genres. Probably the earliest reference to Socratic self-knowledge is in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, when Strepsiades lists to his son Pheidippides the benefits of a Socratic education, he explains, "you will come to know yourself, how ignorant and dense you are" (γνώσει δὲ σαυτὸν ὡς ἀμαθὴς εἶ καὶ παχύς, 842). Moore has argued that Aristophanes associates the pursuit of self-knowledge, and perhaps even the phrase *gnôthi sauton*, specifically with Socratic education and philosophy.⁶⁴ The anecdote in the *Apology* (20c–21a) about Chaerephon at Delphi reveals, not surprisingly, that the Socratic pursuit of self-knowledge remains always associated with the challenge posed by the Oracle. Early in the *Phaedrus*, for instance, Socrates dismisses Phaedrus' mythological questions on the grounds that "I am not yet able, as the Delphic Oracle advises, to know myself; it therefore seems silly to me, when I am still ignorant of this, to investigate other things" (οὐ δύναμαι πω κατὰ τὸ Δελφικὸν γράμματα γινῶναι ἑμαυτόν: γελοῖον δὴ μοι φαίνεται τοῦτο ἔτι ἀγνοοῦντα τὰ ἄλλότρια σκοπεῖν, 229e–230a). Unlike Plato's Socrates, however, who discusses self-knowledge frequently,⁶⁵ Xenophon's Socrates thinks that "not to know oneself, and to imagine that one knows what one does not, is very close to

64 Moore 2015a; Moore 2016, 11–12; Dover 1968 ad loc. is surprised that this sense of παχύς ("thick/dense") does not reappear in comedy.

65 Other significant Platonic discussions of self-knowledge in *Chrm.* 164d–165e and *passim*, *Prt.* 343b, and *Phlb.* 48c.

madness" (τὸ δὲ ἀγνοεῖν ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἄμῃ οἶδε δοξάζειν τε καὶ οἶεσθαι γιγνώσκειν ἐγγυτάτω μανίας ἐλογίζετο εἶναι, *Mem.* 3.6.9), and the subject reappears in the discussion with Euthydemus at *Memorabilia* 4.2.24.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, a fragment from Aristotle's *On Philosophy*, cited by Plutarch (*Adv. Col.* 20), appears to confirm the overall picture: "of the things written in Delphi the most divine (θειότατον) seems [to be] the 'know yourself' (τὸ γνῶθι σαυτὸν), which struck the key-note (ἐνέδωκεν), as Aristotle said, of Socrates' perplexity and his inquiry (Σωκράτει ἀπορίας καὶ ζητήσεως)" (fr. 1.1). In tragedy, self-knowledge also remains closely connected with the Delphic Oracle. The most obvious example is Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, which thematizes self-knowledge more than any other extant tragedy. Sophocles' Oedipus, like Socrates, receives from Apollo at Delphi a shocking oracle about himself and spends the rest of his life putting it to the test. Plato characterizes Socrates' quest for someone wiser than himself as a "necessary" (ἀναγκαῖον, *Ap.* 21e4) service to Apollo, though both Plato's Socrates (e.g., 21c1) and Xenophon's (*Ap.* 15) are not satisfied simply believing Apollo. Conversely, Oedipus and Jocasta seem determined to prove their oracles false: "listen to me," explains Jocasta, "and learn how human beings have no share in the art of prophecy (οὐδὲν μαντικῆς ἔχον τέχνης); I will show you a quick proof of this (σημεῖα τῶνδε σύντομα)" (708–10). Jocasta's "proof" is the story of Oedipus' birth, which elicits a chilling recognition in Oedipus: "I seem just now to have invoked terrible curses upon myself in ignorance (οὐκ εἰδέναι)" (744–5). Nevertheless, when the oracle seems to have been disproven by the natural death of his adoptive father, Oedipus celebrates, "why should anyone consult the Pythian hearth?" (τί δῆτ' ἄν, ὦ γύναι, σκοποῖτό τις τὴν Πυθόμαντιν ἐστῖαν, 964–956); and yet the chorus has just sung, "I'll never go in reverence to the holy navel of the earth, nor to the shrine at Abae, nor to Olympia, unless these [oracles] apply for all mortals to point at" (εἰ μὴ τάδε χειρόδεικτα | πᾶσιν ἀρμόσει βροτοῖς, 896–901). Throughout the play, Sophocles actively thematizes Oedipus' self-ignorance: Apollo's prophet, Teiresias, makes the most of the theme (366–7, 415, 424); Jocasta's final words to Oedipus are "may you never learn who you are" (εἴθε μήποτε γνοίης ὃς εἶ, 1068); and the Herdsman, on the point of revealing the truth, warns Oedipus first not to ask "knowing nothing" (εἰδὼς οὐδέν, 1151), and then begs him "by the gods, my lord, please make no further inquiries" (Μὴ πρὸς θεῶν, μὴ, δέσποθ', ἱστόρει πλέον, 1165).

To observe that Sophocles' play thematizes self-knowledge is not to claim it as a Socratic reception; the Oedipus story is at least as old as the text of Homer's *Odyssey*.⁶⁷ Yet it is not clear when Apollo's oracle to Oedipus became part of

66 Moore 2015b.

67 See story of Oedipus and "Epicaste" at *Od.* 11.271–4.

the myth, and in fact, it seems more than possible that Sophocles invented Oedipus' visit to Delphi. Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* only mentions a single prophecy to Laius "to save his city by dying childless" (θνήσκοντα γέννας ἄτερ σῶζειν πόλιν, *Sept.* 746–9), and too little remains of Aeschylus' *Laius* (*TGF* 3, pp. 231–2) and *Oedipus* (*TGF* 3, pp. 287–8) to conclude which elements of the story Sophocles inherited from him.⁶⁸ Though significant fragments do survive from Euripides' *Oedipus* (c. 415 BCE), only fr. 539a (*TGF* 5.1, p. 571) seems to describe Apollo's oracle to Laius: "although Phoebus once forbade it, [he] fathered a child" (Φοίβου ποτ' οὐκ ἐώντος ἔσπειρεν τέκνα). Euripides' treatment of the myth in *Phoenissae* (c. 409–407 BCE) also ignores Apollo's oracle to Oedipus: in Jocasta's prologue, Oedipus meets Laius *on the way* to Delphi, and he never actually arrives. Instead, "son killed father, took his chariot, and gave it to his adoptive father (τροφεῖ) Polybus" (44–5), something that Sophocles' Oedipus, having heard from Apollo "terrible and disastrous things" (δεινὰ καὶ δύστηνα, *OT* 790), would never do. If, however, Sophocles in fact invented Apollo's oracle to Oedipus, as the available evidence suggests he did, then he would have deliberately made the play about *self-knowledge* (rather than about the inscrutability of fate), in which case we cannot ignore the Socratic context. Moreover, we know from the *didaskalic* records that one of Socrates' prosecutors, the tragedian Meletus, also wrote an *Oedipus* (48 fr. 1 *TGF*, pp. 187–8). Not a word from Meletus' play has survived, but would it not be wonderful (and completely in keeping with Plato's characterization, in particular) if Socrates had in fact framed his self-defense in ways that self-consciously appropriated and perhaps even parodied elements in one of his accusers' plays? We may never know for certain; but these limitations notwithstanding, no story ever illustrated Socrates' point in the *Phaedrus*, that self-knowledge must precede all other inquiries, so well as the story of Oedipus.

3 Conclusion

This treatment of Socratic themes in tragedy is not intended to be comprehensive, but rather to model some possible approaches to the subject and demonstrate what some of the earliest Socratic receptions may have looked like. We know that Socrates and his associates were mocked in comedy with increasing specificity in this period, as the "Intellectual Comedy" developed

68 Pindar briefly mentions a prophecy in *Olympian* 2, but calls it "long foretold" (ἐν δὲ Πυθῶνι χρησθὲν παλαιόφατον, *Ol.* 2.39–40), suggesting that he too has in mind the prophecy to Laius and Jocasta.

as a recognizable sub-genre.⁶⁹ While no tragedian mentions Socrates by name, some tragic texts beginning as early as the late 430s BCE (e.g., *Medea* from 431 BCE) seem increasingly aware of ideas and methods attributed to him. If the pace of possible Socratic receptions in tragedy increases in the ensuing decades—which I have not set out to prove, though it seems to me defensible—we should feel encouraged by the fact that this corresponds to our understanding (drawn from Aristophanes, Plato, and Xenophon) of Socrates' most active period.

It has been my contention in this essay that a diachronic-evolutionary approach to the Socratic problem broadens our data-set to include new texts and genres, and allows a more holistic reading of his legacy. This diachronic-evolutionary approach applies lessons from Nagy's study of the evolution of Homer's text to the figure of Socrates. In particular, we have observed a series of traits (poverty and shoelessness), attitudes (towards political rhetoric), ideas (the theory of continence, the primacy of self-knowledge), and methods (the *elenchus*) that may be offered as some of the earliest available evidence for Socrates' growing reputation and influence. Examples of other Socratic topics in tragedy, beyond the scope of this paper, but surely worth a closer look, would include (among others) *atheism* (e.g., Eur. *Her.* 1340–6; *IT* 385–91; *Hel.* 1137–50; Critias fr. 19, *TGF* 1, pp. 180–2; Pl. *Ap.* 26b–31a) and *piety* (e.g., *Alc.* 10, *Hipp.* 764, 1081, *Hec.* 786–95; Pl. *Euthphr.* 5d, 6e, 12d, and *passim*), *philosophy of language* (e.g., *Hel.* 588; Pl. *Phd.* 65e–66a, *Resp.* 6.507c–e) and *psychagogia* (e.g., *Med.* 368–70; *Hec.* 736–46; Pl. *Phdr.* 261a–b, 271c), all of which share elements with views attributed to Socrates. Some of these texts, like *Medea* (431 BCE) and *Hippolytus* (428 BCE), significantly antedate Aristophanes' *Clouds* and Ameipsias' *Connus*, commonly viewed as the first texts to mention Socrates and treat Socratic themes.

One of the most significant recent interventions in Homeric studies has been the identification and elucidation of “periods” of Homeric textual criticism and scholarship, beginning in antiquity.⁷⁰ This work has illuminated the “multiform” nature of Homeric poetry, complete with variant readings and internal contradictions.⁷¹ Such multiformity is of course characteristic of oral composition, which the Socratic tradition is not. Yet the diverse and sometimes contradictory nature of our texts about Socrates share, as I hope to have suggested, elements with the Homeric tradition that may be turned to our advantage: enlarging the number of texts that can be shown to engage with

69 Bromberg 2018.

70 Nagy 2009.

71 Nagy 1996, 8–9 and *passim*.

Socratic ideas beyond the canonical *Sôkratikoï logoi*, exploring more fully his and his successors' intellectual contexts, and documenting the development through literature of an "idea of Socrates" in the minds of his contemporaries during the final decades of his life. That an analogous approach to Socrates and the Socratic "multitext" might be possible should excite anyone interested in the parallel histories of literature and philosophy. Scholars interested in the historical Socrates may look forward to expanding the canon of texts from Socrates' own lifetime that shed light on his life, ideas, and activities; scholars interested in the literature of the late fifth century BCE may look forward to a fuller understanding of Classical Greek authors' engagement with a man considered by his contemporaries and successors one of the most remarkable of his time. By viewing Socrates through the lens of reception studies and examining a modest portion of a single genre in the earliest period of Socratic receptions, this essay hopes only to move this project a small step forward.

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Socrates in Early Fourth-Century Rhetoric: Polycrates, Lysias, Isocrates, and Pseudo-Andocides

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1 Background: Dialogues and Rhetorical Compositions

Socrates' followers gave the Greek world a new type of fiction, the Socratic Dialogue. They were not, however, the only writers to endow a prose discourse with a fictive or at least unrealized setting. Fictive speeches had also come into vogue. In the 390s–80s, what we today consider philosophy and rhetoric were beginning to take shape as disciplines, each forming and promoting itself in part through a fictionalizing literature that mimicked its origins in oral discourse. Although most of our information about Socrates comes from his associates' dialogues, writers of speeches also contributed to the formation and transmission of Socrates' literary portrait, employing it in service of their own professional and ideological goals. Besides the productions of Socrates' circle, the only other sources of the first decades of the fourth century to mention him are (mostly) fictive speeches of three rhetorical writers. Their contributions thus constitute a vital element of the reception of Socrates by the generation that followed him.

Three writers whom we shall examine are the sophist Polycrates, the speechwriter Lysias, and the educator and public intellectual Isocrates. I shall conclude with a look at the apparent imprint of Socrates upon the *Against Alcibiades*, falsely attributed to Andocides but written perhaps by Socrates' associate Aeschines of Sphettus. Interestingly, all four writers also interact with the figure of Alcibiades.

We should first acknowledge that it is doubtful whether our writers would have named their discipline “rhetoric.” The substantive, *rhêtorikê*, is not attested until the first quarter of the fourth century, in Alcidas' *On Those Who Write Written Speeches, or On Sophists* (fr. 1.2) and in Plato's *Gorgias* (448d9, etc.). We do not know who coined the term.¹ Moreover, leaving the author of [Andocides] 4 for the end of this chapter, we cannot say that Polycrates, Lysias,

¹ Against the thesis of Schiappa (1990; 1999, 14–29; 2003, 40–54, 221–2) that Plato coined the term *ῥητορικὴ*, see Pernot 2005, 21–3.

and Isocrates would have grouped themselves in one discipline over against “philosophy” as a different discipline. Plato, after all, is the first we know to demarcate *rhêtorikê*, a discipline using speeches and aiming at persuasion, from *philosophia*, a discipline using question-and-answer examination and aiming at a rational account.² Alcidas (fr. 1.2) and Isocrates (13.1, 21), on the other hand, applied the term *philosophia* to *their* oratorical pedagogy. For present purposes I take rhetoric to be a deliberate way of fashioning and delivering discourse to lead an audience to perceive a subject in a certain light (cf. Pl. *Phdr.* 261a7–8, e1–4). I call our three writers practitioners of “rhetoric” for two reasons: 1) composing speeches, and teaching others to do so, was a recognized profession by the later fifth century; 2) these men’s work falls into that discipline.

1) Gorgias, Protagoras, Hippias, Thrasymachus, Polus, and others earned fees from display speeches and from teaching speech-making and argument.³ Some of these and other fifth-century teachers also wrote instructive handbooks, *technai*.⁴ Although most *technai* consisted of model discourses, those by Licymnius and Polus seem to have included recommendations on partitioning speeches and/or using stylistic elements.⁵ “The remarkable consistency with which topics and verbal formulae are found in corresponding places in extant speeches suggests the existence of one or more manuals which contained such precise regulatory information.”⁶ Aristotle’s observation (*Soph. el.* 183b30–184b3) that rhetoric was taught more scientifically by some than by others does not prevent us from speaking of purveyors of speeches as practitioners of a single profession.

2) Aside from some epistles, the surviving works of Isocrates and Lysias take the form of speeches, as did the discourses attributed to Polycrates (see §2 below). Polycrates and Isocrates took pupils.⁷ Polycrates, Lysias, and, in the

2 Cf. Schiappa 2003, 45–9; Cole 1991, esp. 27–9, 98–9. Philosophy’s ownership of a kind of rhetoric is asserted in *Phdr.* 272b–274b and *Plt.* 303e–304e. On philosophical rhetoric in Plato, see McCoy 2008; Yunis 2017.

3 Display speeches and teaching are mentioned in Plato’s *Gorgias*, *Protagoras*, *Hippias Minor* and *Hippias Major*. For demands for fees, cf. *Resp.* 1.337d6–7, *Hp. mai.* 281c–282d, *Phdr.* 266c1–5.

4 For Protagoras’ *Antilogiai* cf. Pl. *Soph.* 232d–e, Cic. *Brut.* 46. For *technai*, cf. Isoc. 13.19, Pl. *Phdr.* 261b6–c3, 266d5–6, Arist. *Rh.* 1.1 1354a12. See remains of early *technai* in Radermacher 1951.

5 Cf. Pl. *Phdr.* 267b10–c3; Arist. *Rh.* 3.13 1414b16–18; Hermias *In Plat. Phdr. schol.* 3.251.12–14 Lucarini and Moerschini.

6 Usher 1992, 59.

7 For Polycrates’ teaching, cf. Isoc. 11.1, 42, 47; Paus. 6.17.9; Ael. *VH* 11.10; *Suda* δ 454 s.v. Δημοσθένης.

beginning, Isocrates wrote forensic speeches.⁸ Forensic speeches imply clients. All three also wrote fictive speeches directed toward connoisseurs, aimed to influence public opinion and/or to entertain and show off the writer's skill.⁹ Into this category fall these men's most explicit responses to the figure of Socrates. By impressing the form of live speech on a discourse aimed at readers, our three shared the desire of writers of dialogues to replicate "the moment of delivery potentially to infinity and ... address multiple audiences."¹⁰

Our authors and the Socratics shared pieces of turf. Like the Socratics, Lysias and Isocrates criticized those whom they called "sophists" (Lys. 33.3, Isoc. 15.4, 215, 221, etc.).¹¹ Isocrates always professed to promote virtue. On the other hand, although both Plato and later tradition represent Socrates as critical of orators (cf. DL 2.19 = SSR I D 1.23, 2.39 = SSR I D 1.217–218), we find contemporaries portraying Socrates as a teacher of subversive orators. Aristophanes' "Socrates" teaches public speaking and debate (λόγοις) by which scoundrels can win in court (N. 239–45). Xenophon recounts that the Thirty Tyrants forbade the teaching of "the art of speeches" (λόγων τέχνη)—an early term for rhetoric—in order to muzzle Socrates (*Mem.* 1.2.31–37), and he reports that Critias and Alcibiades had earlier hoped to gain skill in speech from Socrates (*Mem.* 1.2.15–16). The hostile Idomeneus (c. 325–c. 270) claimed that Socrates was "clever in rhetoric" and was, with Aeschines of Sphettus, the first to teach public speaking (ρήτορεύειν, DL 2.19–20 = SSR I D 1.27).¹² As we proceed, we shall examine how our four authors sought to negotiate the complexities that the figure of Socrates posed to their own programs.

2 Polycrates (c. 440–c. 370)

At the beginning of his *Busiris*, Isocrates makes it clear that Polycrates took up teaching out of poverty (1). The *Hypothesis* to the *Busiris* (hereafter *Hyp. Bus.*) adds that Polycrates was plying the trade of "sophist." He made enough of a

8 For Polycrates' courtroom speeches, cf. Dion. Hal. *Isae.* 20. Isocrates (15.36) and his son denied that Isocrates wrote forensic speeches, but Aristotle insisted he had written many. Dionysius, relying on Cephisodorus, judged that Isocrates did write some (*Isoc.* 18). See further Whitehead 2004.

9 On speeches composed for fictive judicial settings, cf. Carey 2007a, 246–8. These differ from speeches written for actual trials but never delivered; cf. MacDowell 1990, 27–8.

10 Carey 2005, 92.

11 Not all Isocrates' references are negative; cf. 2.13, 4.82, etc. On the question, what was a sophist?, see now Ramírez Vidal 2016.

12 On Socrates' rhetorical strategies, see Rossetti 1989 and 1993; Roochnik 1995.

reputation that Dionysius of Halicarnassus mentions him alongside Antiphon, Thrasymachus, Isaeus, and other leading orators of the late fifth and early fourth centuries, despite criticizing his style (*Isae.* 20, *Dem.* 8).¹³

Isocrates tells us (11.4) that Polycrates had written both a defense speech, *apologia*, of Busiris, the mythical king of Egypt who sacrificed strangers (Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.11), and an accusation, *katêgoria*, of Socrates. Isocrates says that although Polycrates “boasts highly” of both discourses, he fails by making Busiris appear more evil than other writers do (4–5). Isocrates offers his own encomium of Busiris to demonstrate how one should compose a discourse of praise (9).

Polycrates’ *Apology of Busiris* was a prime example of the paradoxical treatment of themes that made his epideictic (display) speeches notorious. In such works he aimed to impress by persuasively arguing a case opposite to what an audience would expect, “speak[ing] of small things in a big way” (Demetr. *Eloc.* 120). For example, he wrote an encomium of mice, in which he included praise of these ignoble creatures for their having gnawed away the bowstrings of the Assyrians invading Egypt (Arist. *Rh.* 2.24 1401b15–16, cf. Hdt. 2.141). His other paradoxical speeches included encomia of flawed epic characters (Clytemnestra, Paris) and humble objects (pebbles, a pot).¹⁴ He may have written a panegyric of Thrasybulus, who had led the overthrow of the Thirty Tyrants.¹⁵ He was also accused of penning a sex manual under the name of Philaenis of Samos (*AP* 7.345.7–9 = Ath. 8.13 335b–c). On the whole, however, Polycrates left the impression that “he was playing around, wasn’t serious, and the very loftiness of his writing is a witty display (*paignion*)” (Demetr. *Eloc.* 120).

It is for his *Accusation of Socrates* that Polycrates is most remembered. It stands as negative partner to *Apologies of Socrates* that appeared in the earlier-to-mid-fourth century by Plato, Xenophon, Lysias, and Theodectes.¹⁶ Since Isocrates is our earliest witness to Polycrates’ work, I quote him in full:

And when you attempted to accuse Socrates, as though you wanted to write a praise speech you gave him Alcibiades as a student, whom no one observed being educated by him, although all would agree that he far

13 On Polycrates’ dates and life, cf. Treves 1952.

14 Polycrates probably also wrote the encomia on salt and bumblebees reported by Isocrates (10.12) and Plato (*Symp.* 177b5). See testimonia in Radermacher 1951, 130–2; Treves 1952, col. 1751.

15 Arist. *Rh.* 2.24 1401a34–35, which however may refer to a passage of the *Accusation*; cf. Blass 1892, 369 n. 4; Funke 2005, 256.

16 For Theodectes’ *Socrates* cf. Arist. *Rh.* 2.23 1399a8–10.

excelled others. So then, if the dead should have the power to recommend what would be said about them, Socrates would be as thankful to you for your accusation as he would be to any of those who are accustomed to praise him.

Isoc. *Bus.* 5–6

Isocrates' critique leads us into four interlocking problems: 1) the speech's contents; 2) date; 3) sources; 4) purpose.

1) Polycrates' *Accusation of Socrates* does not survive. Most scholars accept its reconstruction from Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (1.2), Libanius' *Apology of Socrates* (= *Decl.* 1 = SSR I E 1), Isocrates, *Hyp. Bus.*, and other sources. The fictional speaker of Libanius' declamation rebuts an "Anytus." This suggests that Libanius is replying to a work that was couched as Anytus' prosecution speech at Socrates' trial. Xenophon only calls his opponent "the Accuser." The charges that span Xenophon and Libanius are that Socrates corrupted his students, Critias and Alcibiades, who as politicians harmed the city; taught laziness, worthless living, and contempt of the laws, democracy, and one's elders; and twisted verses of poets (Hesiod, Pindar, Theognis, Homer) in subversive ways. A scholion on Aelius Aristides (Schol. BD on Aristides III.480 Dindorf) confirms that Polycrates accused Socrates of trying to undermine the democracy by praising Odysseus in the *Iliad* when the hero stops Thersites from speaking against the kings (2.211–277). Libanius' defender in addition refutes charges that Socrates resembles atheistic sophists, who had been guilty of impiety (153–157), and that he teaches false swearing (109–110). The latter charge is not reported by Plato or Xenophon but is attested by imperial writers.¹⁷ It is a good inference that it came to them from Polycrates. Unusual oaths are certainly the matter behind the statement in *Hyp. Bus.* that Socrates was accused of *worshipping* birds and dogs.¹⁸ Even though the first charge in the historical indictment, that Socrates "does not acknowledge the gods that the city worships but introduces other, new divinities" (Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.1, Pl. *Ap.* 24b8–10, *Euthphr.* 3b2–3), is not explicitly mentioned in Xenophon or Libanius, Polycrates' *Accusation* did make a religious as well as a political attack. Politics come through in the way Polycrates' "Anytus" seems to have laced the indictment's second charge, corrupting the youth, with attacks on

17 Socrates was condemned in part because "he used to swear new oaths" (Joseph. *Ap.* 2.263, 97/98 CE); "he swears by the plane tree and the dog" (Maxim. Tyr., *Disc.* 18.6e, later second century CE); *Ep. Soc.* 17.2.

18 For the standard reconstruction of Polycrates' *Accusation*, cf. Humbert 1931; Chroust 1957. On *Hyp. Bus.* and its relation to Polycrates, see Murphy 2016.

Socrates as anti-democratic. In Libanius he thundered, “Socrates is a hater of the people (μισόδημος) and persuades his companions to make a mockery of the democracy” (53).

2) Although Hermippus (third century BCE) and other ancient authorities thought that Polycrates’ *Accusation* was written for Anytus to declaim at the actual trial, Favorinus (c. 80–160 CE) exploded this belief by pointing out that the work mentioned Conon’s rebuilding of Athens’ Long Walls, which occurred later in 394/393 (DL 2.38–39). Isocrates had already shown the falsity of this belief when he noted (11.6) that Socrates was dead when Polycrates wrote. We cannot date Isocrates’ *Busiris* precisely, but its likely *terminus ante quem* is the early 370s, since Lysias replied to Polycrates (cf. §3 below), and Lysias is last heard from around 380.

Scholars often date the *Accusation* to the late 390s on two assumptions: the rebuilding of the walls was recent news; and the careers of Conon and Thrasybulus, whom it praised (Lib. *Decl.* 1.160), had not yet suffered their later reverses. Neither assumption is cogent, and it is just as likely that Polycrates mentioned those politicians only after their deaths (Thrasybulus in 388, Conon after 392). If Socrates’ plane tree oath (n. 17 above) did appear in Polycrates, one suspects influence from Plato’s *Phaedrus* (or a hypothetical “proto”-*Phaedrus*), for Phaedrus swears by it (236d10–e1). E.R. Dodds and R.S. Bluck placed the *Accusation* after Plato’s *Gorgias*, for other reasons. We have no impediment to a date in the mid-380s. That would in addition provide motivation for Polycrates’ apparent treatment of oaths as evidence of worship, since Socrates swears “by the dog, the god of the Egyptians” at *Gorgias* 482b5.¹⁹

3) We know almost nothing of what Anytus said about Socrates at the actual trial. Plato only has him say that Socrates’ teaching is bad for the youth (*Ap.* 29c4–5, 34b1). Xenophon traces Anytus’ animosity to Socrates’ jibes at his tanning business and to Socrates’ influence over his son (*Ap.* 29–31). I cannot prove that Polycrates did not embed material from the trial into his *Accusation*. Our evidence, however, is explicable on the hypothesis that his sources were primarily Socratic dialogues. Unless Libanius is expatiating on poetry on his own volition, the amount of space Polycrates will have devoted to attacking Socrates’ exegesis, answered in 62–73, 86–97 of Libanius’ *Apology*, is unsuited to an actual trial.²⁰ Some of the verses are quoted, though not by Socrates, in Platonic dialogues that could have appeared before Polycrates wrote (Hesiod

19 On the date of the *Accusation*, see Murphy 2016, 28–30.

20 Xenophon devotes only *Mem.* 1.2.56–59 to “the Accuser’s” Hesiod and Homer quotations, quotes a different verse of Theognis than does Libanius (*Mem.* 1.2.20), and leaves out Pindar.

in *Chrm.* 163b–c, Pindar in *Grg.* 484b). Speaking of “those who are in the habit of praising” Socrates (11.6), Isocrates pulls back the curtain on a literature already in vogue, on a jockeying for position before sophisticated audiences.

4) If our solutions to 1–3 can stand, we are already on the way to a guess at Polycrates’ purpose. Some scholars have seen the *Accusation* as a political pamphlet aimed to support the Athenian democracy in the late 390s when many intellectuals, along with the upper classes generally, were leery of or even hostile to renewed anti-Spartan imperialism.²¹ If a date well into the 380s is accurate, though, the moment for such polemic will have passed after the King’s Peace of 386. Also, Isocrates, a promoter of “political discourses,” would likely have taken the *Accusation* more seriously had it grappled with current issues. Admittedly this is an argument from silence; but it is corroborated by antiquity’s unanimity about the frivolous nature of Polycrates’ display pieces, suggesting that they did not have political purposes. I propose instead that the *Accusation* had a twofold aim: to impress Polycrates’ audience by making a (paradoxical) case against a man whose conviction for impiety had already come to evoke regret; and to gain “market share” from competing teachers, among whom would be Socratics.²²

3 Lysias (459/8?–c. 380)

Dionysius of Halicarnassus, pseudo-Plutarch in the *Lives of the Ten Orators*, and other ancient sources give a somewhat garbled account of Lysias’ life. From Plato (*Resp.* 1.328b4–6) we know that he and his brothers, Polemarchus and Euthydemus, were sons of Cephalus, a wealthy native of Syracuse who lived in the Piraeus. Dionysius relates that Lysias migrated to the Athenian colony at Thurii in southern Italy with Polemarchus when he was fifteen (*Lys.* 1). If this took place when Pericles constituted the colony in 443, we get a birth date of 459/8. Since Demosthenes indicates (59.21–22) that Lysias’ mother was still alive and Lysias was keeping a young mistress in the late 380s, that birth date may be too early. Our ancient biographies detail how Lysias studied rhetoric, was banished from Thurii after the disastrous Athenian expedition against Syracuse and returned to Athens in 411, was arrested and barely managed to escape from the Thirty Tyrants in 404, and was recognized for helping the

21 This interpretation undergoes criticism in Funke 2005.

22 On competition among fourth-century intellectuals, see Wareh 2012.

democrats regain the city in 403. He lived on in Athens as a resident alien, *metic*, and excelled as a speechwriter, *logographos*.²³

Lysias is a mute or absent character in three dialogues in the Platonic corpus. These passages show Lysias' and Socrates' social circles overlapping, so that one may infer that the two men knew each other.

In the *Republic*, Socrates narrates his arrival with Polemarchus to Cephalus' house. There he finds the old man with Lysias and Euthydemus (1.328b4–6). We hear nothing from the latter two in the lengthy discussion that follows.

In the *Phaedrus*, young Phaedrus, a fan of Lysias and of speeches, reads a speech on love that is supposed to be by Lysias.²⁴ After Phaedrus has heard Socrates' second speech on love, however, his loyalty to Lysias wavering, he admits that a politician had recently disparaged Lysias as a *logographos* (257c2–6)—which for Plato's Socrates is close to sophist (*Euthyd.* 272a–b). Socrates faults Lysias for failing to define key terms or structure his speech rationally (263a–264d). He adds more general criticisms of “the rhetorical man,” of whom Lysias is a paradigm: the orator need not know good and evil (260c6–10) but only to manipulate the masses' beliefs about what is plausible (273b1); his ability is not a *technê* (269b7–c2); and he lacks knowledge of his subject matter and of his hearers' souls (271d–272a). In the end, Socrates asks Phaedrus to tell Lysias the difference between a philosopher, who speaks and writes from knowledge of truth, and a speechwriter, who does not (cf. 278b–e). Whatever the historical relationship between Lysias and Socrates, Plato's Lysias is an emblem of a rhetoric in need of philosophy.

The *Clitophon* begins when Socrates asks about a rumor he has heard: Clitophon had told Lysias of faults in Socrates' teaching and was praising the lectures of Thrasymachus (406a). After complaining that Socrates promotes virtue without explaining how to get it, Clitophon finally voices the desire to be able to praise Socrates before Lysias and others with no admixture of criticism (410e3–5). However enigmatic may be Clitophon's attitude, this ending, like the “tell Lysias” ending of the *Phaedrus*, suggests that in Lysias, rhetoric deserves to receive a message from philosophy.²⁵

Unlike Polycrates, of whom nothing survives, Lysias' name attracted more speeches than are genuine. Pseudo-Plutarch (*X Orat.* 836A) reports that 425 orations were attributed to him, of which Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Caecilius of Calacte accepted 233 as genuine. In addition to speeches for the

23 For a summary of the life and career, see Usher 1987, 125–30; Todd 2000, 3–8.

24 Although this speech appears as Oration 35 in some collections of Lysias, I consider it Plato's own composition. Cf. de Vries 1969, 11–14.

25 On Clitophon's puzzling attitudes, cf. Moore 2012.

courts, Lysias also wrote speeches for the Council and Assembly, plus panegyric, erotic, and epistolary discourses (Dion. Hal. *Lys.* 1). The only extant epideictic work is the *Funeral Oration* (= Orat. 2).²⁶ Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Lys.* 29) quotes part of another *epideixis*, the *Olympic Oration* (= Orat. 33), in which the speaker urges the overthrow of Dionysius I of Syracuse. Ancient critics praise Lysias' clever narrative and clear style. The speeches most relevant to his reception of Socrates are *Apology of Socrates* (fr. 271–276) and *Against Aeschines the Socratic for Debt* (fr. 1–4). The Lysianic corpus also contains speeches against the son of Alcibiades (Orat. 14 and 15), and fragments of one or two other speeches against Alcibiades (father or son) are attested (fr. 8–12 Carey). These express hostility against their targets but do not mention Socrates.

Cicero provides our earliest record of the story that Lysias wrote a defense speech for Socrates to declaim at his trial. Socrates, having read the speech, replied that “just as if you brought me fancy shoes [lit. “from Sicily”], I wouldn’t use them, although they would be easy to put on and fit my feet well, because they aren’t manly,” so he thought the speech eloquent but not brave and manly (*De Or.* 1.231). In Diogenes Laertius (2.40 = *SSR* I D 1), Lysias replies, “How could the speech not fit you, if it is good?” Socrates, who scorns cloaks and shoes, merely answers, “Well, wouldn’t even good cloaks and shoes fail to fit *me*?” In Stobaeus (*Flor.* 3.7.56), Lysias points out, “You’ll be dead then, if you don’t make a defense like this.”²⁷

This is the sort of story that scholars in antiquity would invent to explain texts that were already extant, and there is no reason to accept its historicity. What about the speech itself? Scholia on Aelius Aristides report that it was “against Polycrates” (fr. 272–273), and pseudo-Plutarch says it was “aimed at the jurors” (836b). While I see no strong reason to pronounce it spurious, the practice of writing declamations—pretend speeches put as unitary discourses into the mouths of famous persons or familiar types—became common with the spread of rhetorical education in the fourth century. I cannot demonstrate that this speech was written by Lysias; in what follows, however, I shall speak as though he was the author.

Byzantine scholars preserve explicit reports that Lysias' *Apology* (fr. 272–276)

- A. told how Demophon (Demophilus in the manuscripts) took the Palladium, an ancient image of Athena, from Diomedes and brought it to Athens;

26 On authenticity, cf. Dover 1968, 193; Todd 2000, 26–7.

27 For these and other versions of the story, cf. Carey 2007b, fr. 271a–g.

- B. rebutted Polycrates' Odysseus argument (see p. 79 above) by insisting that Socrates praised Odysseus only because the hero blamed Thersites for speaking out of place, as Homer says;
- C. recalled how Anytus "persuaded Meletus for a consideration" to bring an indictment for impiety against Socrates because Socrates had mocked his trade as a tanner;
- D. "made mention of" (μέμνηται) Meletus;
- E. used the word ὑπουργία, "service."

In other words, Lysias blamed Anytus for instigating the prosecution out of personal rancor. Lysias may have also turned the spotlight onto Anytus as the one in love with Alcibiades.²⁸ He probably argued that the case should have been brought as a private lawsuit.²⁹

As I observed about Polycrates' *Accusation*, the *Apology's* concern with interpreting poetry does not suit the needs of a defense speech to be shouted before 500 jurors. Meier was right to peg both speeches as rhetorical exercises.³⁰ According to Dionysius, Lysias wrote some discourses "for amusement" (μετὰ παιδιᾶς, *Lys.* 3). We can imagine him as an old acquaintance of Socrates bristling at Polycrates' pamphlet and undertaking a rejoinder. At the same time, it is believable that Lysias would seek to defend his public status as a speechwriter against Plato's powerful attack in the *Phaedrus* by penning an oration that might well have won the case. We do not know whether Plato had circulated the *Phaedrus's* criticisms before Lysias wrote his *Apology of Socrates*. If Plato had done so, the latter work serves as a counterstroke, in effect saying, if you want actually to win, speak my way, not like Socrates and/or Plato's Socrates.

Lysias' A. above must have come in an answer to a charge by Polycrates that by praising Odysseus' knowledge in war, which the hero showed by deceiving enemies, Socrates had advocated theft and/or lying. Libanius' rebuttal makes it appear that Polycrates had attacked Socrates for "alleging that Odysseus was honored for the theft of the Palladium" (*Decl.* 1.105). Lysias may have replied that it was not bad for an Athenian to praise Odysseus' deceit and theft, since in the end Athens gained the sacred statue. In B., Lysias will have insisted that Socrates actually taught the young virtue. Since Polycrates' *Accusation* was in the mouth of Anytus (cf. Μέλητος ἢ οὗτος Ἄνυτος, *Lib. Decl.* 1.161), we can infer that Lysias mentioned Meletus as another of the prosecutors, but we cannot infer that Lysias also rebutted arguments that had been assigned to Meletus.

28 Schol. Arethae in *Pl. Ap.* 7 Cufalo [18b3].

29 Rossetti 1975. Unlike Rossetti, however, I suspect Xenophon's *Apology* predated Polycrates' and Lysias' compositions; cf. Stokes 2012.

30 Meier 1861, 114–18 n.

Respect for Socrates shows itself in Lysias' speech for a client who was suing Aeschines of Sphettus, the Socratic, for debt (Ath. 13.611d–612f = fr. 1 Carey = SSR VI A 16).³¹ Its speaker says that he agreed to loan money to Aeschines because "I thought that since this man had become a student of Socrates and spoke many lofty speeches about justice and virtue, he would never try or dare do the things that the most wicked and unjust men do" (2). A little earlier we read the sarcastic lines, "A fine fulfillment of happiness for the philosopher, the perfumer's trade!—conforming to the philosophy of Socrates, who totally rejected the use of all perfumes and ointments." It is not clear whether all the sarcasm stood in Lysias' speech or whether Athenaeus' narrator embellishes, as Carey thinks he does. The excerpt closes, "Such is the life of the sophist" (5). Consistent with Lysias' narrative skill and dark humor is the picture of passersby at dawn who think mourners had gathered at Aeschines' shop to escort his corpse to his funeral, so great was the throng of creditors (4).

From our fragments we cannot deduce a date, and Aeschines' chronology is confused in Diogenes Laertius. Jean Humbert (1967, 218–220) puts this period of Aeschines' life in the 380s. If our assumptions are right, we have by now a Socrates associated in the public mind with righteous and simple living, while "sophists" still excite mistrust. If the term "philosopher" in the Athenaeus passage stood already in Lysias' speech, Lysias is designating a social slot. Philosopher is not Aeschines' *job*, for he has a shop and sells perfumes. But Lysias' hearers presumably are to recognize "philosopher" on Socrates' model and expect Aeschines to scorn luxuries. They are also to know that the philosophical life aims at happiness. Socrates is already becoming an emblem of a lifestyle, commitment to which is to be genuine and total.

Lysias divorced Plato too from the image of Socrates. Aelius Aristides reports that Lysias "calls Plato a sophist, and again, Aeschines" (*Or.* 46 p. 311 Jebb = fr. 449 Carey = SSR VI A 19). If Aristides had access to the relevant work of Lysias or to an excerpt from it in the second century CE, Lysias must have allowed or caused it to circulate, as rhetorical writers were doing with their works in the fourth century. By the 380s, a rhetorical writer could respect Socrates while not endorsing his followers.

We cannot, however, infer from respect for Socrates, if he did feel it, that Lysias adhered to Socrates' views on the best life. Like writers of dialogues, Lysias in our extant speeches writes in someone else's voice. His speeches do

31 Ancient sources differ over the title but refer to the same speech; cf. Sauppe 1850, 2.171. The man indicted in Lysias' *Prosecution Against Aeschines on the Confiscation of the Property of Aristophanes* (Harpocration χ 15 = fr. 5 Carey) was probably not the Socratic; cf. Blass 1892, 1.532; Carey 2007b, 312.

not stint on moralizing, but by moralizing he aims to influence jurors' votes, not reform their character. Lysias would write for weak cases; for example, the client in Oration 24 pretty clearly did not qualify for a state pension. The speaker of Oration 25, a politician who had not opposed the Thirty, argues that choice between oligarchy and democracy is largely unprincipled, since one is guided in every case by self-interest, and in his case, democracy gives more chance to attain prominence (7–11, 13). All this ignores the Socratic concern for justice in the state. Lysias' forensic speeches reveal an Athens in which Socrates' footprint was faint.

4 Isocrates (436–338)

Isocrates was Plato's biggest competitor as an educator and public intellectual. Before Plato achieved prominence, Isocrates in *Against the Sophists* had criticized positions that match those of Antisthenes. For decades, he and Plato would exchange scarcely veiled ripostes. Toward the end of his long life, disagreements about rhetoric and philosophy surfaced between Isocrates and Aristotle. In this section, however, we shall inquire into Isocrates' reception of Socrates.³²

Isocrates' teachers are said to have included Prodicus and Gorgias (Dion. Hal. *Isoc.* 1). After writing forensic speeches for clients (see above, n. 8), Isocrates embarked on a career of teaching small numbers of elite pupils. He sought to impart ways of speaking and acting successfully in state and household, to train leading statesmen and intellectuals (15.162, 223, 12.30–32; Dion. Hal. *Isoc.* 1). Of soft voice and retiring temperament (5.81, 12.9–10, 15.151, etc.), Isocrates circulated his discourses about “momentous” and weighty topics (15.3) to readers; he did not declaim to throngs. Isocrates never stopped calling his pedagogical enterprise “philosophy.” The closest he comes to defining philosophy is to say that it comprises studies that enable one by astute judgments (*doxais*) to attain what is best (15.271). For him, philosophy cannot aim at scientific knowledge (*epistêmê*) about human life, for situations are ambiguous and outcomes unclear.³³

32 On Isocrates vis-à-vis various Socratics, cf. Wareh 2012; Murphy 2013; Murphy 2018; Pinto 2015.

33 Isocrates describes his *philosophia* at 4.47–49, 15.183–188, 270–282, 12.30–32. Among recent treatments, see Halliwell 1997; Livingstone 2007; Schiappa and Timmerman 2010, 43–66; Levett 2015. On *doxa* in Isocrates, cf. Poulakos 2001.

In §2 above we encountered Isocrates' only surviving mention of Socrates, in the *Busiris*. Isocrates there creates the impression that he knew Socrates fairly well, for he can say that no one ever saw Alcibiades educated by Socrates. But, as he often does, Isocrates omits key specifications. His words are consistent with Socrates' having educated no one *and* with Socrates' having educated others but not Alcibiades, and/or with his having consorted with Alcibiades but not having "educated" him. It remains unclear how close Isocrates' contact with Socrates really was.

Isocrates' attitude toward Alcibiades, one notices in passing, is contradictory. He distances Socrates from Alcibiades' education as though to excuse him for Alcibiades' misdeeds but then extols Alcibiades as excelling all others. In his early *On the Team of Horses* (Orat. 16, c. 397), Isocrates had effusively praised Alcibiades in the defense he penned for Alcibiades' son.

The anonymous *Life of Isocrates* found in some manuscripts says that Isocrates "became the student of Socrates the philosopher" (1). This may only be an inference from the *Phaedrus*. There, Phaedrus calls Isocrates the "companion" (ἑταῖρος) of Socrates. Socrates in reply praises Isocrates' nature, character, and literary achievements, but adds that he will excel more "if he should become dissatisfied with such work, and a sublimer impulse lead him to do greater things. For that mind of his, Phaedrus, contains an innate tincture of philosophy" (φύσει ... ἔνεστί τις φιλοσοφία τῇ τοῦ ἀνδρός διανοίᾳ, 279a3–10, tr. Hackforth).

I take this passage as irony, but that does not rule out acquaintance between Socrates and a young Isocrates.³⁴ When Socrates was executed, Isocrates reportedly mourned greatly and appeared in public the next day clad in black ([Plut.], *X Orat.* 838f).³⁵

Isocrates does show in the *Busiris* that he keeps abreast of the growth of Socrates' reputation, for he knows discourses of "those who are accustomed to praise him." One assumes this means writers of Socratic dialogues. Isocrates presents Socrates as a polar opposite of Busiris; if the latter is a villain defended, one may think the former a just man accused. This and the fact that people's habitual praise of Socrates is not presented as controversial suggest that by the time of writing, the 380s or perhaps the early 370s, Socrates' reputation had been substantially rehabilitated among the reading public.³⁶

34 Readers of the passage as irony include McAdon 2004; Yunis 2011, 243–6; Brancacci 2011, 29–38. *Contra*, see now Gastaldi 2013.

35 Roisman and Worthington 2015, 165, is inclined to accept this story.

36 On the date of the *Busiris*, see Livingstone 2001, 40–7; Blank 2013, 14 n. 35.

Problems attend any attempt to establish how Isocrates responded to Socrates' ideas. Some older scholarship presents Socrates as a powerful and direct influence on Isocrates' life and thought.³⁷ To be sure, both men extolled virtue, urged intellectual formation to be practical, criticized sophists and demagogues, and called for virtuous leaders. These stances are not so unique, however, that we can single out Socrates as the inspiration for them. What is more, our sources about Socrates are literary portraits whose authors do not agree, and their dates are often uncertain. Isocrates for his part refers to contemporary thinkers only by vague locutions.

I hazard to suggest only one material link to Socrates' ideas in Isocrates' work. In the *Helen* (380s–c. 370), Isocrates attacks as “strange and paradoxical” the thesis that “courage and wisdom and justice are the same thing, and we have none of them by nature, but there is one knowledge (*epistêmê*) over them all” (10.1). It is a strong bet that Isocrates is reacting to the Virtue is Knowledge (= VK) and Unity of Virtue (= UV) theses as outlined in Plato's *Protagoras* and perhaps *Meno* and/or *Laches*. He may also aim at Euclides of Megara, who “declared that the good is one [but] called by many names, now wisdom, *phronêsis*, now god, and at other times mind, and so on” (DL 2.106 = SSR II A 30, and cf. SSR III F 17).³⁸ Similarity of VK/UV in Plato and the Megarians, complemented by the testimony of Aristotle, shows that notion's importance in early portraits of Socrates, whether or not the historical Socrates discussed it.³⁹ Even if he *did*, though, we get no inkling that Isocrates had heard VK/UV from him or even connects it to him. He does not oppose VK/UV in *Against the Sophists*. The fact that Isocrates rejects VK/UV only by the time of the *Helen* is most simply explained on the assumption that he has read it in Plato. Socratic dialogues will have been the conduit through which Socratic thought was presented to cultivated audiences.

In two late works, however, Isocrates portrays himself as a second Socrates. In the *Antidosis* (354–353), Isocrates composes a “pretend defense speech” (13) of his life, character, and teaching (6), an “image” of his thought (7). The fictive indictment charges Isocrates with corrupting the youth by teaching them how through oratory to gain unjust advantage in lawsuits (30). Isocrates echoes Plato's *Apology* from the moment when the fictive prosecutor says that

37 Cf. Jebb 1893, 2.4; Norlin 1928, 1.xvi–xviii.

38 The Megarians spoke of “one virtue called by many names” (DL 7.161 = SSR II A 32). On Isocrates' targets in *Helen* 1, cf. Murphy 2013, 337–9; Murphy 2018, 110–11.

39 Cf. Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 3.8 116b4–5, 6.13 1144b17–20; *Eth. Eud.* 1.15 1216b3–10. In support of Aristotle's testimony, cf. Irwin 1995, 5–11; *contra*, cf. Dorion 2011, 11, 16.

Isocrates “can make the weaker arguments stronger” (15).⁴⁰ Parallels to Plato’s *Apology* lace the *Antidosis* up to its closing: “as it seems best to you, let each of you cast his vote” (323)—although “the god” of Socrates’ final words (*Ap.* 35d6–8) is not mentioned, perhaps because “introducing new divinities” was not in Isocrates’ fictive indictment.⁴¹

Why does Isocrates make himself into a second Socrates? I believe this move reveals anxiety about Plato’s increasingly successful co-option of the field of philosophy. Having relegated to the “boundary lands between philosopher and statesman” a person who answers to Isocrates’ description (*Euthyd.* 305c7), Plato’s Socrates blames philosophy’s ill repute on those who push into it “from outside like gate crashing revelers, reviling each other and being contentious (φιλαπεχθημόνως ἔχοντας) and always making their discourses about humans, hardly doing what befits philosophy” (*Resp.* 6.500b3–6). φιλαπεχθημον- words are rare, and in Plato this is our only instance. It is likely that Isocrates has this passage in mind when he hits back, “we who are occupied with political discourses, which they call contentious (φιλαπεχθήμονας), are much gentler than they” (260).⁴² “They” are those “who hold sway in eristic arguments ... and busy themselves with astronomy and geometry and studies of that sort” (261; cf. 262–263, 12.26–27). Isocrates intones, “I don’t think we should call what does not at present benefit our ability to speak or act ‘philosophy.’ Instead, I call such activity a ‘mental gymnastics’ and a ‘preparation for philosophy’” (266, tr. Mirhady and Too). The costume of second Socrates enhances Isocrates’ claim that *his* is the true philosophy—ironically while it acknowledges how Plato’s portrait of the man has become philosophy’s emblem.

Into his *Panathenaic Oration*, begun in 342 and completed in 338 just before his death, Isocrates weaves again his claims to ownership of philosophy. He complains of criticisms from “sophists” (5), who assert knowledge, slander his system of instruction or *philosophia* (9), and blame him for “annihilat[ing] the philosophies and all the educational systems of others” (19). He dismisses a kind of education that matches that of the Academy (26–29). The final section of the work is a dialogue, not in Socratic question-answer form but in opposed speeches (204–263). After Isocrates refutes his interlocutor in their initial exchange, the man “went away wiser and more humble in his mind ...

40 Charges against Socrates include “making the weaker argument stronger and teaching others to do the same” (Pl. *Ap.* 19b5–c1).

41 For parallels cf. Norlin 1928, 1.xvii; Too 1995, 192–4. On Isocrates self-portrayal, see Ober 2004; Murphy 2013, 340–51.

42 Isocrates calls φιλαπεχθήμονας his own “true” discourses, *Antidosis* 115 and *On the Peace* 65. The latter was written c. 355, so that Isocrates’ word choice there may also be provoked by the *Republic*.

and he experienced what it says at Delphi, so that he ‘knew himself’” (230, tr. Papillon). Here Isocrates takes over a well-known Socratic *topos* (Pl. *Phdr.* 229e5–6, *Plt.* 48c8–d2, *Alc.* 129a2–4, 132c7–10; Xen. *Mem.* 4.2.24–25). After their final exchange, Isocrates leaves it to audiences, in the spirit of Socrates, to work out a conclusion. We are left with the impression that the unnamed “sophist” at §19 was right: Isocrates does think his is the true philosophy, the one worthy of Socrates.

Future ages would place Isocrates in rhetoric, while Plato with Socrates leads the company of philosophers. Isocrates’ attempt to co-opt the figure of Socrates, and even the dialogue form, came too late. Plato had already packaged Isocrates’ entire field as “rhetoric.” By criticizing, parodying, subverting, and transfiguring, Plato put Isocrates’ “philosophy” out of the running and took over its intellectual credibility.⁴³

5 Pseudo-Andocides Oration 4 and Aeschines of Sphettus

The *Against Alcibiades* is attributed wrongly to Andocides in the manuscripts and by pseudo-Plutarch (*X Orat.* 835A, although under the title *Apology Against Phaeax*), Harpocration (ε 45, ε 152), and Photius (*Bibl. cod.* 261, 488a). The speech pretty clearly hails from the fourth century. It alludes cryptically to the condemnation of Socrates and develops the literary portrait of Alcibiades, so often linked to that of Socrates. Pietro Cobetto Ghiggia has made a good case that its author was Aeschines of Sphettus.⁴⁴

The speech purports to be one of three delivered before an assembly of Athenian citizens by an unnamed politician on a day when he is threatened with being voted into ostracism. The speaker says that Alcibiades and Nicias are also threatened and that they will give speeches next. He argues that Alcibiades is the one who should be ostracized for his many crimes, which he recounts with details that extend only to 416 BCE. We know from Plutarch that in fact a third politician, Phaeax, was also threatened with ostracism together with the other two, but the ban in the end fell on a demagogue, Hyperbolus (Plut. *Alc.* 13.3–5), the last person ostracized in Athens. This occurred in 416 or

43 On this aspect of Plato’s strategy, see Vegetti 2006.

44 1995, 109–21; “plausibile,” Silvio Cataldi (*Pref.* to Cobetto Ghiggia 1995, xxvi–xxx). Of the authors credited with the speech in ancient sources, Pacini has fewest objections to Aeschines (2009, 71–3).

415.⁴⁵ Things said by our speaker match things known of Phaeax's career, so that he is clearly meant to be Phaeax.

Late in the speech, the speaker claims that he has four times been acquitted in court. Since it was ruled in one trial that he did not deserve a death sentence, he argues—fallaciously—that he does not deserve exile per ostracism, since the ostracism procedure is not a trial. Speaking of two others who were tried on the same charges as he and *were* convicted and executed, he reasons, “if someone thought that a defense deserved to be taken up on behalf of those who were executed, arguing that they died unjustly, you would not tolerate people who tried that” (38). The reason: the legal authority of the *dēmos* as enacted in court decisions may not be denied or appealed. Such a challenge would be different from, say, Socrates' contention (Pl. *Ap.* 32b1–c4; cf. Xen. *Hell.* 1.7.15) that it was illegal for the Assembly to condemn the generals who had not rescued shipwrecked Athenians in the storm after the Battle of Arginusae in 406. That decision was not made in a court, and the judgment was taken about them *en masse* (ἀθρόους, 32b4; cf. “in one vote,” Xen. *Hell.* 1.7.34, *Mem.* 1.1.18).⁴⁶ To cultivated readers in the fourth century, no one was more likely than Socrates to come to mind for being executed legally but unjustly.

Tangled problems of setting, date, authorship, and purpose beset this work, and space does not permit detailed treatment of them. The prevailing view is that [Andocides] 4 is a fictive ostracism speech of the fourth century.⁴⁷ After considering the case that Aeschines of Sphettus is our author, we shall take a look at the speech's interaction with Socrates' legacy.

Chronology and language rule out Andocides as author.⁴⁸ The same holds for Phaeax (Plut. *Alc.* 13.2 by emendation) and Lysias (Ath. 9.17 408c), attributions that are explainable as ancient scholars' mistakes. Not so is Diogenes Laertius' report that Aeschines of Sphettus wrote “the defense speech of the father [*sic*] of Phaeax the general” (2.63 = SSR VI A 13.16–17). Although he did write speeches as well as dialogues (DL 2.20 = SSR I D 1, 2.63 = SSR VI A 13.16–19),

45 Cf. Heftner 2000, esp. 34–5.

46 Their circumstances and culpability also differed (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 34.1). Lysias, however, cites this decision as an example of the *dēmos*' self-preservation, not as illegal (12.36). According to Gish 2012, 181–6, it is not known what law Socrates and others thought was being violated, but condemnation of all by one vote seems to have been a key objection.

47 The problems are summarized by Edwards 1995, 131–6; Pacini 2009, 65–88. Considerations for a date in the earlier fourth century: the speech's details about Alcibiades' life; irrelevance of ostracism to later generations; possible *terminus ante quem* in 347/346, when Demosthenes (21.147) mentions two crimes of Alcibiades also described in our speech.

48 On the language, cf. Feraboli 1972 and 1974. Because Aeschines' remains are fragments of dialogues, linguistic analysis of Orat. 4 would promise meager reward.

Aeschines, unlike Lysias, was not so known for speeches that forgers would be very likely to co-opt his name. Aeschines would have been ten or fifteen in 415 and, unlike Phaeax, had no connection to the events such as to engender conjectures that he wrote the speech.

Our text of Diogenes must be wrong, however. Ancient sources name defense speeches after the defendant, or occasionally after the prosecutor/plaintiff, not after a third party. Diogenes or his source should have been able to name Phaeax's father, Erasistratus (Thuc. 5.4.1, [Pl.] *Eryxias* 392a3). Of emendations, the best is Cobetto Ghiggia's insertion of *καί*, yielding two defense speeches, "of his father *and* of Phaeax."⁴⁹ Since some people said that Aeschines' father was a sausage maker (DL 2.60 = SSR VI A 3.1), one can imagine him writing a speech to rehabilitate the family name.

In addition to his *Alcibiades*, Aeschines' dialogue *Axiochus* also portrayed Alcibiades together with his cousin of that name. Members of Alcibiades' family appeared in Aeschines' *Callias* (a brother-in-law in 13–15 of our speech) and *Aspasia* (distant relative; Callias also appeared). The athletic prowess of the title character in Aeschines' *Miltiades* is also noted in our speech (33).⁵⁰ Aeschines knew the stories of this family. Invective, for which he was known (SSR VI A 83–5, 89), spices up our speech. The hypothesis of Aeschinean authorship best accounts for all the data.

Some interpreters have taken our speech as a political pamphlet from the early 390s, whose author attacks nascent democratic imperialism in the person of the recently deceased Alcibiades (d. 403). The speech makes too many historical and legal errors, however, including errors about ostracism, for a work set so close to the events and of such purpose.⁵¹ Alcibiades' misdeeds after spring 415—scandals of the Mysteries and Hermae, Sicilian disaster, betrayals of the city—get no mention, although on this hypothesis they cry out for it. Finally, the speech is not effective anti-imperialist polemic. Why write a pretend ostracism speech, get the procedure wrong, but devote two-fifths of the length to it, if one's goal is to vilify Alcibiades to promote a political agenda?

Better to see in our speech a rhetorical exercise.⁵² In fact, we can call it a declamation *avant la lettre*. Quintilian and other ancient critics date the genesis

49 1995, 112–14.

50 See fragments of these dialogues in SSR VI A 41–81.

51 Cf. Heftner 2001.

52 Burn 1954; Gribble 1997. Prof. Cobetto Ghiggia graciously informs me of his current view: "più ancora di un 'pamphlet' si tratti comunque di una esercitazione retorica composta in un circolo socratico che doveva considerare il rapporto avuto da Socrate stesso con Alcibiade estremamente negativo," *per litt.* 20 Nov. 2016.

of the declamation to the later fourth century.⁵³ As we have seen, however, early rhetorical writers had composed exercises that substantially satisfy the definition of declamation. Plato's *Apology* comes close, and the speech of "Lysias" in the *Phaedrus* is a *de re* declamation. Need to advertise his skill as a speechwriter provides Aeschines' motive, for according to Diogenes Laertius, poverty drove him to teach and write speeches for clients when he returned from Syracuse to Athens under the shadow of Plato and Aristippus (2.62 = *SSR* VI A 13.4–6). The speech shows off the author's ability to argue a case against a much more prominent rival.

Where does the Aeschines hypothesis get us? First, it prompts us to look at how Socratics put their hand to fictive speeches as well as dialogues, for if we are right, we have a speech from another Socratic besides Antisthenes.⁵⁴ As genres, declamation and dialogue run parallel, for in both the author does not speak in his own name but represents characters as speaking.

Second, we encounter the Socratic circle's obsession with Alcibiades. Alongside his appearances in the Platonic corpus and in Aeschines are appearances in dialogues of Antisthenes (*SSR* V A 198–202) and Euclides (*SSR* II A 10). If we are right to see in §38 an allusion to Socrates, we may think that by tracing Alcibiades' excesses to his character as formed early on, the speech exonerates Socrates from the charge of corrupting him (cf. above, n. 52). As we saw, Polycrates' Anytus had accused Socrates of teaching false swearing. He accused him of "loving tyranny" (*Lib. Decl.* 1.163). When our speaker accuses Alcibiades of these very things (39, 27), he shows Alcibiades as author of his own vice.

Set before an assembly, the speech does not pursue philosophical inquiries. Like many orators, the speaker appeals to justice, mostly within the framework of law. He does touch on a few Socratic problematics. He opens up a problem that he does not solve when he says that someone banished to exile will "harm this city ... even more justly than before his expulsion" (5). He connects justice with self-interest when relating how Alcibiades, by unjustly doubling the tribute levy, will damage the city by alienating the allies (11). Pronouncing Alcibiades' transgressions all the more terrible because he "understands what matters" to the city (19), the speaker comes near to the Liar Paradox of the *Hippias Minor*.

53 *Inst.* 2.4.41; *Aeschinis Anon. Vita* III 18–23; Phot. *Bibl.* cod. 61, 20a. On the genre, see Russell 1983.

54 Extant speeches of Ajax and Odysseus are attributed to Antisthenes, *SSR* V A 53–4. Translations of the fragments and testimonia, in the same order as in *SSR*, are found in Prince 2015. On Antisthenes and Socrates, see Luz (in this volume). Aristotle testifies to speeches of advice to and accusation or defense of Achilles (*Rhet.* 2.22 1396a25–26).

6 Conclusion

The conventions of Athenian forensic oratory allow us to suppose that of our four writers' speeches, only two, the *Accusation* of Polycrates and the *Apology* of Lysias, presented "a" Socrates, a depiction of his character. Although we can infer from their genres that the audience received cues for evaluating Socrates' character, from our fragmentary notices we can only pull out things that their speakers said Socrates did or did not do, not how they showed him speaking and acting as the singular personage we meet in dialogues. Our other speeches merely reinforced the message that Socrates was a good man.

These rhetorical pieces also share a formal feature. As we have noted, with the presumed exception of Lysias' *Against Aeschines the Socratic*, they are all fictive orations. Although, again, Lysias may be in part an exception, the material from which they draw and to which they react is, strictly speaking, fiction: Socratic dialogues or dialogical units, which appeared at an average rate of one a month in the first decades of the fourth century.⁵⁵ We must acknowledge that when we speak of early fourth-century reception of Socrates, what was being "received" was already a largely *literary* identity, to which in turn were accreted new features as writers turned the figure of Socrates to their own purposes.⁵⁶ That process is seen even in the case of Socrates' trial and condemnation, as all four of our writers added twists to its story. That momentous event made Socrates the emblem of the philosopher for the rest of antiquity, and rhetorical writers would continue to engage with it.⁵⁷ Although our four do not establish otherwise unattested facts about the historical Socrates, they deserve a place in the history of reception for their contributions to the formation and transmission of his unique literary identity.

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⁵⁵ Rossetti 2001.

⁵⁶ On the formation of Socrates' literary identity, cf. Rossetti 2004.

⁵⁷ Cf. Döring 1979; Murphy 2016.

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Plato's Reception of Socrates: One Aspect

Sandra Peterson

1 Socrates Converses

Most obvious about Plato's understanding of the historical Socrates is that Plato deemed it worthwhile to create meticulously crafted fictional conversations of a character Socrates headed for execution for corrupting the youth of Athens. The craftsmanship freights each appearance of this Socrates with importance.

Conversation preoccupies him. He says, "As long as I breathe and am able to ... I will not stop ... saying just the sorts of things I am in the habit of ... I will do this to whomever, younger or older, I happen to meet" (*Ap.* 29d–e). "I offer myself to both rich and poor alike for questioning and if someone should wish to hear what I say while answering" (33b).¹ On his dying day his wife Xanthippe confirms his preoccupation. She says, "Oh, Socrates, now for the very last time your companions will speak to you and you to them" (*Phd.* 60a). She singles out for mourning the end of Socrates' conversing.

2 Conversation with Socrates Strips Interlocutors

To such evidence that conversation is Socrates' life's occupation three others in Plato's dialogues add a telling detail.²

The general and statesman Nicias says that Socrates turns any conversation into a testing of the life of his interlocutor.

Whoever is very close to Socrates and associates with him in conversation (*dialegomenos*), necessarily, even if he began to converse (*dialegesthai*) about something else before, won't stop being led around by him in discourse before he falls into giving an account of himself (*to didonai peri*

¹ Translations from Plato are mine, with texts from Duke et al. 1995, Burnet 1901–1907, or Slings 2003.

² Dorion 2013 sketches many other aspects of Plato's Socrates besides his preoccupation with conversation and reaches a view different from mine about the continuity of Plato's character Socrates.

autou logon), on what way he is now living, and what way he has lived his past life. Whenever he falls in with him, Socrates will not send him off before he tests (*basanisêi*) all these things well and finely.

La. 187e6–188a3

The geometrician Theodorus says that Socrates forces any interlocutor to strip himself and contend in argument.

Socrates, it is not easy for one who has sat down by you not to give an account (*didonai logon*), but I just now talked nonsense when I said that you were going to allow me not to strip and would not use compulsion like the Spartans.... The Spartans order one either to go away or to strip; but you ... don't let any come (*ton proselthonta*) go away before you strip him and force (*anagkasêis*) him to wrestle in arguments.

Tht. 169a6–b4

The phrase “give an account” that Nicias and Theodorus use is a term of art from the sport of verbal contest between a questioner and an answerer.³ Such contest is a main type of the conversation or discussion (*dialegesthai*) to which Nicias refers. To give an account is to have the role of answerer. Its counterpart is to receive (*dexasthai*) or take (*lambanein*) an account, as questioner. The questioner elicits admissions from the answerer and aims to defeat the answerer by deriving an absurdity. In Theodorus' metaphor the answerer wrestles by grappling with consequences as he tries to avoid defeat.

The military and political celebrity Alcibiades says that Socrates' words compelled him to see himself so clearly that he felt shame. Alcibiades addresses Socrates with “You're an assaulter” (*hubristês*, *Symp.* 215b) and then explains:

Whenever someone hears you speaking or your words when someone else is speaking ... we're stunned and we're possessed ... Whenever I hear them ... my heart leaps and tears pour out because of this man's words ... Because of this ... one here I was frequently reduced to thinking that it wasn't worth living in the condition I'm in ... For he forces (*anagkazei*) me to admit that although I myself am in need of much, yet I neglect

3 See *Prt.* 336c, 348a (“making trial of one another in their own arguments, taking and giving”: *lambanontes kai didontes*), 348b (*dôsei logon*); *Tht.* 177b (“to give and receive an account personally (*idiai*)”); *Meno* 75c8; *Phd.* 78d. See also Arist. *Soph. el.* 165a. The phrase *hupechein logon*: “to sustain a statement” as at *Prt.* 338d—and see Arist. *Top.* 100a—is equivalent to “give an account.” Aristotle's *Topics* records conventions of his later era for such contest.

myself ... I have experienced toward him, alone of human beings, what one wouldn't suppose was in me—feeling ashamed towards someone.

Symp. 215d–216b

According to Nicias, Theodorus, and Alcibiades, then, your talking with Socrates unavoidably reveals the convictions by which you live your life.⁴

Socrates contests even against himself, as we learn in Plato's *Hippias Major* when Socrates asks Hippias the same questions that Socrates asked himself (*Hip. mai.* 286c–290e; 292c–293e).⁵

The Socrates of the *Phaedrus* implies, indeed, that he inquires only into himself:

I am not yet capable, in accordance with the Delphic inscription, of knowing myself; it therefore seems absurd to me, while I am still ignorant of this, to inquire into what belongs to others. So ... I inquire ... into myself, to see whether I am a beast more complex and more violent than Typhon, or an animal both tamer and simpler.

Phdr. 229e6–230a5

If Socrates inquires only into himself, then all Socrates' inquiries of others are self-inquiry. We infer that in questioning another, Socrates learns what sort of person he would be *if* he had his interlocutor's commitments.

In the *Apology* he refers to his questioning as “examination” (*exetaseôs*) for which he became hated (22e6–23a1). He describes it thus:

I am always active about matters of yours, going to each one privately—like a father or an older brother—persuading you to care for virtue.

Ap. 31b

And he says:

To do nothing unjust nor unholy—this is my whole concern (*toutou de to pan melei*).

Ap. 32d

4 On Nicias and Alcibiades, see Sharp 2006, ch. 2.

5 See Olson 2000.

A man who is of even a little use should ... consider this only whenever he acts: whether his actions are just or unjust, and the deeds of a good man or a bad.

Ap. 28b

It emerges rather unexpectedly that all the following accounts describe one life-consuming activity of Plato's Socrates:

- (i) He examines himself and others via a questioning process that first strips interlocutors, uncovering their life-guiding convictions, and then draws consequences from those convictions.
- (ii) He persuades people to care for virtue.
- (iii) He considers what a good man would do.
- (iv) He acts with the sole concern of avoiding wrongdoing.

3 One Type of Socratic Conversation: Question-Answer Contest

Socrates' known preference is for the conversation (*dialegesthai*) that is a personal contest between a questioner and answerer (*Symp.* 194d). Nicias and Theodorus refer to this preferred mode where Socrates acts as questioner.

Plato's dialogues present such contest as typical sport of the youngsters of Socrates' time. For example, when in the *Theaetetus* Socrates wants to start a discussion (*dialegesthai*, 146a7), Theodorus pleads off on the grounds that such talk (*dialektou*, 146b3) is more suitable for the young (146b4). Callicles in the *Gorgias* complains that Socrates spends time at what is suitable for boys (485a4–7), “conversing in this way” (*dialegesthai houtô*, 485b3), that is, “refuting” (*elegchôn*, 486c4). The boys at the palaistra of the *Lysis* spend most of their time in discussion (*logois*, 204a3); young Menexenus is skilled at *erizein* (*eristikos*, 211b3). *Erizein* is stylized disputation. (*Eristikos* does not yet bear Aristotle's immediate implication of specious argument [*Soph. el.* 165b].) The young Charmides is at the age to be willing to *dialegesthai* (*Chrm.* 154e6–155a1). A young interlocutor of the *Lovers* is confident of his competing skills (*hêdeôs diagônisaimên*, 134c). The young Cleinias in the *Euthydemus* (275a–c) is used to answering (*apokrinesthai*), as is the youth Alcibiades (*Alc.* 106b). The Eleatic Visitor of the *Sophist* recognizes young people's attraction (*Sph.* 233b) toward teachers of the *antilogikê technê* (232e) for dispute in private conversations (*idiai sunousiai*, 232c). In Xenophon's depiction, Alcibiades, “less than twenty years old,” refutes Pericles, who claims he too was clever at such things “at that age” (*Mem.* 1.2.40–46). The sport is an old one.

Socrates as a youth shows his liking for verbal sport when he challenges Zeno with a question in Plato's *Parmenides* ('Don't you acknowledge ...?' 128e). Parmenides and Zeno admire Socrates' impulse for argument (130a–b). Zeno recalls his own love of victory (*philonikia*) in his youth (128d–e).

This youthful sport is the mature Socrates' device to engage the at-risk youths that concern him, such as Alcibiades (*Alc.* 132a, 135e) and Cleinias (*Euthyd.* 275a–b). They risk being corrupted (*Resp.* 494b–d; *Thg.* 128c). Socrates compares such conversation to a competitive ball-game (*Tht.* 146a). He uses this favorite sport of youngsters to get to know his interlocutors: he is eager "to make us discuss (*dialegesthai*) and become friendly and talkative with one another" (146a). Such discussion strips the soul for viewing (*Chrm.* 154e).

Although verbal sport is a favorite of the young, the elders Protagoras, Hippias, and Gorgias are veterans and professionals of it. See *Protagoras* 335a ("I have had contests of speeches with many men"); *Hippias Minor* 363d and 373b ("offer to answer any question"; "would flee the questioning of no man"); *Hippias Major* 287a–b (Hippias offers to teach Socrates how to answer); *Gorgias* 447b–c, 449; *Meno* 70b–c.

Some lines of questioning were familiar (*Grg.* 448a: "It's many years since anybody asked me anything new"). The *Theages* perhaps alludes to memorizable bits (*apomnêmonēuontes*, 121d). Yet, despite their experience, Protagoras, Hippias, and Gorgias seem unprepared for Socrates' questions. Plato's Socrates seems an improviser.

Plato's Socrates questions, besides youths and professional duelers, anyone who claims authority on a topic (as in the *Euthyphro* and *Ion*). Authorities are expected to survive questioning in their expertise. Aristotle later explains:

It is the job of someone who knows not to say false things concerning what he knows and to be able to expose (*emphanizein*) the one who speaks falsely. The first thing is to be able to give an account (*dounai logon*); the second is to get (*labein*) one.⁶

Soph. el. 165a24–28

Alcibiades judges Socrates outstanding at this verbal dueling:

6 On verbal duel in Plato, see Frede 1992.

In being able to *dialegesthai* and knowing how to give and receive an account (*logon te dounai kai dexasthai*) I would be amazed if Socrates yields to anyone among human beings.⁷

Pl. *Prt.* 336c

The famous Protagoras admires Socrates more than anyone of his age (*Prt.* 361e), presumably for his conversational skills.

4 Another Type of Socratic Conversation: Competing Speeches on Demand

Socrates, preferring questioning, sometimes resists an interlocutor's contrary wish for competing extended monologue (*Hp. mi.* 373a; *Prt.* 336b). Sometimes, however, the occasion or a demanding interlocutor provokes responding monologue from Socrates.

For example, in the *Symposium* the party guests elect as their after-dinner mutual entertainment a contest of encomia to *erôs* (176e–177e). In his turn Socrates enters a speech into their contest. (Even in the *Symposium*, however, Socrates shows his preference for questioning: he delays Agathon's speech with *dialegesthai* [194e]; he starts his own speech with questions [199b–201c]; and after the competition he reverts to *dialegesthai* [223c] with Agathon and Aristophanes.)

Republic Books 2–10 contains a long speech by Socrates. It responds to Glaucon's request that Socrates rebut (358a–b) Glaucon's courtroom-style speech (358e–361c). Glaucon and Adeimantus (361d–367d) argued that an unjust person has advantages over a just person. Socrates' counter-speech meets precisely the brothers' requirement that Socrates show how justice affects the psyche of the just person (358b): his rebuttal includes an account of the individual psyche (to 441a–b) and how justice advantages it (443b–445b).

Socrates previously contrasted such opposing speeches—speech versus speech (*logon para logon*, 348a–b)—with question-and-answer. Socrates' rebuttal speech, however, incorporates many questions that elicit his interlocutors' assent to details of his speech.

7 Xenophon says similarly: “[Alcibiades and Critias] knew that Socrates ... dealt in whatever way he might wish in arguments with all that held conversation (*dialegomenois*) with him” (*Mem.* 1.1.14–15).

In the *Phaedrus* Socrates takes part in a speech contest that Phaedrus initiates. Phaedrus asks Socrates to outdo Lysias' speech that Phaedrus has just read aloud (235d, 236b). Socrates gives a speech, but then retracts it (243a) with a second speech. Socrates says that Phaedrus forced him to use some poetical words (257a).

In the *Phaedo* Socrates undertakes to defend himself as if in a court of law against a charge that he is taking too lightly the prospect of dying (63a–b; 63e; 69d). Cebes has the view that if one is not able to prove (*apodeixai*, 88b5) that the soul is immortal, one should not be cheerful about dying (88b3–4). As Cebes wishes, Socrates provides a defense speech—though with much interspersed questioning.

Socrates' monologues, even monologues with interspersed questioning, might seem exceptions to Socrates' practice of unavoidable examining that Nicias, Theodorus, and Alcibiades reported. But the monologues are not exceptions. These on-demand monologues from Plato's Socrates are the first step of full Socratic examination: they serve for character revelation. Socrates' sensitivity to his particular interlocutor enables Socrates to tailor a speech to deliver a revealing reaction. (The Socrates of the *Menexenus* observes that an audience favors a speech that praises it [235d], as does the Socrates of the *Gorgias* [513b8–c3].)

Plato does not depict, after these made-to order monologues, the next stage of examination—exploring consequences. Plato leaves the work of wrestling to the reader.

5 Other Types of Socratic Examining Conversation: Spontaneous Speech; Listening

As a last resort for interlocutors variously unsuited to personal verbal contest Socrates volunteers monologue even when an interlocutor has not explicitly requested a speech to his taste. An interlocutor's reaction to any speech reveals him.

For example, Theodorus' unwillingness (*Tht.* 146b, 162a–b, 165a–b) unsuits him to personal contest. But just as Theodorus predicts (169b), Socrates strips Theodorus by means of the spontaneous monologue that is the digression of the *Theaetetus* (172c–177c). The digression recommends, among other things, escaping from here and becoming like God (176a). Theodorus' hearty approval reveals him (176a; 177c). That Socrates has said he *always* gets what he says from the wise person he is talking to (161a–b) emphasizes that the monologue mirrors Theodorus.

Quite differently from Theodorus, Meno of the *Meno* is unsuited for revelatory personal contest. Meno's unsuitability is that he, though eager for question-answer duel, comes prepared with set pieces (80b). Questioning will not well reveal Meno. It will only elicit his repertoire. Meno shows his eagerness for duel in his first words to Socrates (70a): they are an abrupt challenge to combat on the topic "Is virtue teachable or not?" The topic is standard (DL 6.10; *Dissoi Logoi* 6). When Socrates deflects Meno's initial challenge and asks instead what virtue is, Meno repeats ideas from Gorgias (71d–e) and then quotes a poet (77b). Meno soon makes another standard move (80d), by reciting a competitive ("eristic") argument familiar to Socrates (80e). Its paradoxical conclusion is that nothing is learnable. Socrates deals with Meno's memorized eristic fare by telling a tale about immortality and recollection from some "wise men and women" (81a). In doing so, Socrates fulfills his previous prediction that he will in the future not fail in readiness to speak to Meno (76e) in the high-flown (*tragikê*) style that Meno likes. Meno, wishing Socrates to teach him (81e) about pre-natal recollection, then accepts Socrates' argument (86c) to the conclusion that the soul is immortal and can recollect what it knew before birth. Meno's persisting interest is to collect repertoire ("I should be very glad ... to hear what I was asking at first," 86c–d).

Socrates sometimes simply listens. The Eleatic Visitor of the *Sophist* and *Statesman* prefers to give extended lecture to a compliant answerer (218d). Timaeus in the *Timaeus* relates a complex tale as his contribution to an entertainment (17b; 20c). In the *Clitophon* Socrates listens to the young Clitophon's complaints against Socrates. Lecturer, tale-teller, and complainer reveal themselves.

Again in these dialogues Plato does not show Socrates in the later stage of examination of what is revealed. The work of considering consequences remains for the reader.

6 Socrates is Attentive and Literal in Conversation

Thrasymachus in the *Republic* complains about Socrates' close attention to what interlocutors say. Thrasymachus says: "You are a blackmailer (*sukophantês*) in arguments" (340d). Thrasymachus' complaint is that Socrates, drawing a consequence from what Thrasymachus said previously, holds Thrasymachus responsible for previous statements.

The *Philebus* conversation illustrates Socrates' attentiveness. The *Philebus* has some features of youthful ("all young," 16a) question-and-answer contest (*amphibêtein*, 11a; *amphibêtêma*, 11b; *amphibêtêseôs*, 19b). Protarchus

conceives of the conversation as question-answer (23d–e), as do Philebus and Protarchus at 27e–28b. But a difference from a conventional duel is that Protarchus and Socrates agree early that each is not contending for victory over the other; rather, they are “both fighting for the truest thing” (14b).⁸ Another difference is that Socrates makes extended declarative contributions to the conversation, as at 19c and at 23c (“taking up some of what has been said before”).

Protarchus reports that a threat (*êpeilêsamen*, 19d) from the interlocutors initiated the conversation: “we would not let you go until there was a satisfactory limit (*peras hikanon*) when these statements had been determined” (*dioristhentôn*: “marked off with boundaries,” 19e). At 11c–d Socrates echoes the phrasing of that previous threat when he says, “It is necessary that the truth about these matters be brought to a limit (*peranthênai*) in every way (*tropôi panti*).” Protarchus maintains the phrasing at 12b: “let us try to reach a limit (*perainein*).” They are going to come to a *peras*—a limit or boundary.

Protarchus’ description that Socrates has granted their present meeting “to determine (*dielesthai*) what is the best of all human possessions” (19c) indicates setting limits more subtly. The verb *dielesthai*, an aorist middle form of *diaireô*, also means “divide.” The verb is the source of *diairesis*, the name for the method of division that defines subordinate kinds by marking them off within a larger kind. To mark off a kind is to impose a limit or boundary.

When Socrates takes up the threatening demand for a *peras* (19d) as a guide for the entire conversation, he thereby also takes up the original plan to “determine” (*dielesthai*, 19c) the best human possession. He tells a traditional story (*phêmên*, 16c), a “gift of the gods” (16c), that “whatever is said to be has in its nature limit (*peras*) and unlimitedness (*apeirian*)” (16c). He is a long-time fan of it (*erastês ... aei*, 16b),⁹ though it has many times left him “bereft and at an impasse” (*erêmon kai aporon*, 16b). Nevertheless, he pursues this available tale to sustain the conversation with Protarchus and Philebus in precise accord with their initial threat not to let Socrates go until they reach a limit. Socrates creatively uses their demanded notion of limit as he divides off subtypes (17c–18d) to treat the problem how one thing can be many (15b). As Socrates prepares for a final count of constituents of the best life, he predicts to Protarchus, “I will thoroughly bring to a limit (*diaperanoumai*) for you this very matter” (53c–d).

8 Brunschwig 1984 explains the utility of a duel in which each participant puts up the best side possible, not for the sake of his own victory, but in order that the contest might illuminate the issue.

9 Plato’s Socrates is a fan of making distinctions (*diairesis*), *Phdr.* 266b3–6; *diêirêtai*, *Euthyd.* 289c.

The Socrates of the *Philebus* tailors what he says precisely and literally to his interlocutor's request—or in this case, threat. Around the provoking granule his interlocutors provide, Socrates accumulates a complex structure.

7 *Philosophia* in Socrates' Conversations

Scholars speak of the philosophy of Socrates and of Socrates' philosophical conversations. Although our words "philosophy," "philosophize," and "philosopher" or "philosophical" are the descendants of and the usual English translations of the ancient words φιλοσοφία, φιλοσοφῆν, and φιλόσοφος, it is hazardous to use our words to describe Plato's Socrates. Our words bear centuries of accretions. Their content is controversial. For greater clarity I will therefore frame my discussion with the ancient words. I employ transliterations—*philosophia*, *philosophēin*, and *philosophos*—both for mention and for use.

Employing the ancient words has the benefit of making completely traceable the textual evidence that warrants my speaking of the *philosophia* of Plato's Socrates. I cite solely passages from Plato that use *philosoph-* stem words.

Initially I assume only that *philosophēin* is an activity, *philosophia* its product and also the activity itself, and a *philosophos* someone who makes a practice of the activity. *Philosophos* is also an adjective meaning "having to do with *philosophia*."

Philosoph- stem words occur frequently in Plato's dialogues,¹⁰ though some dialogues have no occurrences (*Euthyphro*, *Crito*, *Laches*, *Alcibiades*, *Meno*, *Hippias Major*, *Ion*, *Clitophon*, and *Theages*). The dialogues contain or imply multiple explanations of *philosophia*. We therefore cannot speak simply of *philosophia* in Plato. I discuss some of the dialogues' various explanations below.

Plato's Socrates claims, rather rarely, that he engages in *philosophia*. I first reflect on the sort of *philosophia* that he claims for himself, then on the sort that some observers attribute to him, and then on some types of *philosophia* explained in Plato's dialogues that Socrates does not and could not claim as his own.

8 *Philosophēin* in the *Apology*

The *Apology* has four occurrences of *philosoph-* stem words—in all instances the verb.

¹⁰ For the count of 346 occurrences, see Rossetti 2010, 59.

Here is the first occurrence:

They [Socrates' old accusers] say that Socrates ... corrupts the young. And whenever someone asks them, "By doing what and teaching what?" they have nothing to say, but are ignorant. So in order not to seem to be at a loss they say the things that are handy against all who engage in *philosophein* (*pantôn tôn philosophountôn*): "the things aloft and under the earth" and "not believing in the gods" and "making the weaker argument the stronger." For I do not suppose that they would be willing to speak the truth.

Ap. 23d

Socrates' phrase "*all* who engage in *philosophein*" strongly suggests that a plurality of people engage in *philosophein*.

"Handy against all" this plurality are the specific charges of cosmic pronouncements, disregard for gods, and "making the weaker argument the stronger." (On this last phrase see more later.)

"Handy to say" says less than "true of all." "Handy" suggests that it is at least plausible to say of all, perhaps because true of most of this plurality.

"Not ... the truth" implies that the old accusers' descriptive words are false of Socrates. It leaves us uninformed whether *philosophein* is false of Socrates because we lack the premise that Socrates' old accusers used the word *philosophein*.

Either his old accusers used the word *philosophein* or they did not. If they did use the word, then because Socrates says that they are not willing to speak the truth, he implies that the word *philosophein* is not true of him; then he does not here include himself in the plurality that engage in *philosophein*. On the other hand, if his old accusers did not use the word *philosophein*, then when Socrates implies that what the old accusers say is not true of him, the possibility remains that he takes *philosophein* as true of him. He merely denies the specific charges.

One at least of Socrates' old accusers, all of whose charges were false, did not use *philosophein* of Socrates. Though Aristophanes' *Clouds* of 423 BCE satirizes Socrates, it contains no *philosoph-* stem words.¹¹

Readers today naturally ask why the one ancient word *philosophein* covers the rather different activities of talking specifically about the cosmos and "making the weaker argument the stronger" on unspecified topics. Gorgias' *Helen* suggests an answer: though it distinguishes quick-thinking *philosophoi*

¹¹ See Edmunds 2006.

from astronomers, it first classes them both together as powerful persuaders by speech (§13). In Gorgias' era having the best story to tell—rather than having the soundest intersubjectively verifiable observational evidence—could be a measure of the successful cosmologist. It is understandable that *philosophein* might refer generally, as at *Apology* 23d, to any persuasive verbal skill whether for cosmology or for quick argument as in a question-and-answer contest.

The second occurrence of *philosophein* is at 28e:

The god stationed me, as I thought and understood, ordering me to live engaging in *philosophein* (*philosophounta*) and examining (*exetazonta*) myself and others.

Ap. 28e4–6

The god's order to which Socrates refers is the Delphic oracle's verdict that no one is wiser than Socrates (21a5–7), an apparent endorsement of Socrates' practice. "Examining" then clearly refers to Socrates' distinctive conversations. Three considerations combine to entail that we must distinguish between Socrates' examining and *philosophein*: (i) Socrates' examining aims to effect care for character (*Ap.* 31b); (ii) Socrates has implied that a plurality do *philosophein* (23d); and (iii) we have no evidence that anyone except Socrates questioned to effect care for character. (The young people that imitate Socrates and question others [23c] evince no aim to effect care for virtue. They simply enjoy hearing examined [23c] those that think they are wise but are not [33c].) Therefore Socrates' unique soul-stripping examining cannot be quite identical with the *philosophein* of any plurality.

A further reason to make some distinction between the plurality's *philosophein* and Socratic examining is that we have no surviving occurrences of *philosoph-* stem words from before the time of Socrates' trial to indicate soul-stripping to effect care for virtue.¹²

So the "and" in "philosophizing and examining" is not epexegetic. The god commanded Socrates to do two distinguishable things, one of which is a subtype of the other. The one is the overarching kind of *philosophein* (persuasive talk with the sub-type of refutatory conversation). A distinguishable and unprecedented sub-subtype of the latter is Socratic refutation that strips souls to induce care for virtue.

Here are the third and fourth occurrences of *philosophein*:

12 Though there are only about a dozen pre-399 BCE occurrences, the collection is nevertheless a huge topic that I cannot treat here. For some data, see Nightingale 1995, 14 n. 3; Rossetti 2010.

If you would say to me.... “Socrates, we will ... let you off, on this [condition] that you no longer spend time in this investigation (*zêtêsei*) nor engage in *philosophein*—and if you are caught still doing this, you will die,” ... I would say to you: ... “as long as I breathe and am able to, I will not stop engaging in *philosophein* (*philosophôn*)”

Ap. 29c6–d5

Here Socrates imagines a reply to current accusers who use *philosophein* to refer to his activities. Replying to these accusers, he repeats their word to refer to his activity of examining. They of course do not understand that the *philosophein* that Socrates now claims for himself—the unprecedented sub-subtype of soul-stripping examining—uniquely aims to move interlocutors to care for their characters.

9 *Philosophia* in the *Euthydemus*

I return to the *Apology*'s phrase, “making the weaker argument the stronger,” that Socrates implies is not true of him (23d).

The phrase indicates one variety of verbal contest. For example, Aristophanes in *Clouds* describes the school of his character Socrates:

They say there are two arguments with them, the stronger (*ton kreitton*) and the weaker (*ton hêttona*); they say the weaker wins, saying more unjust things.

Ar. Nub. 112–115

A young interlocutor in the *Lovers* speaks of winning with a weaker argument: “Against him I would be totally pleased to fight it out, and I know well that I would be sufficient to support the hypothesis I proposed even if I had proposed something yet weaker (*phauloteron*) than this” (134c). The *Eryxias* alludes to winning while speaking falsehoods: “[With certain arguments] a person ... might get the better of (*perigignoit*) his opponents ... though saying false things while his opponents were saying true things” (395b–e). Its example is that one might win with the now “stronger” (*kreittôn*, 395c4) argument that the name “Socrates” begins with an alpha instead of a sigma (395c2–5). The *Eryxias* does not state that argument. (Aristotle's *Rhetoric* 1402a24–26 connects making the weaker argument the stronger with disputation [*tois eristikois*, 1402a3] and with Protagoras [1402a24].)

Although the *Euthydemus* does not contain this phrase “making the weaker argument the stronger,” it seems apt for the arguments of the brothers Euthydemus and Dionysodoros. For example, Dionysodoros draws from Ctesippus this argument: That dog is yours. That dog is a father. Then that dog is your father (298d–e). Ctesippus’ implicit initially strong position was of course that his father is no dog. The questioning that defeats the answerer’s initially strong position thereby “makes the weaker argument the stronger.”

Socrates describes the brothers thus:

No one is able to stand up to them, they having become so terrific at fighting in arguments and in refuting whatever is said, whether false or true.

Euthyd. 272a–b

Socrates uses *dialegesthai* for the brothers’ occupation:

I suppose you understand *dialegesthai* better than I do—you having the art, while I am a non-professional (*idiôtou*) human being.

Euthyd. 295e

You seem to me ... to be working out the *dialegesthai* totally finely.

Euthyd. 301e

Socrates wants to acquire the brothers’ skill (*sophia*, 272b–c) of eristic (*tês eristikês*, 272b–c), that is, disputative art. His caution that their *dialegesthai* is not suitable in front of a group (304a) does not condemn its suitability for private conversation.

Socrates implies that the brothers do *philosophia*, but badly. When Crito is so dismayed at professed teachers (306e) that he is unable to encourage his son toward *philosophia*, Socrates says:

Dear Crito, do you not know that in every pursuit the lowgrade (*phauloi*) are the majority and worth nothing, while the serious ones are few and worth everything?

Euthyd. 307a

We infer that Socrates considers *eristikê*, the brothers’ one-on-one duel (“private conversation,” *tois idiois logois*: 305c–d), one variety of *philosophia*, though not *philosophia* done well.

As Michael Forster puts it:

In the *Euthydemus* he [Socrates] is happy to allow that the sophists Euthydemus and Dionysodorus are philosophers [*sic*], albeit bad ones (304d–307c), but he clearly thinks that they care ... only for displaying cleverness in verbal combat. Here the term instead seems mainly to connote a certain sort of activity, regardless of the motive behind it: the activity, common to Socrates and these sophists, of engaging in a certain type of refutatory conversation.

FORSTER 2006, 17

Socrates defends *philosophia* (305b) from the criticism of a grumbling onlooker (304e–305a) and from Crito's dismay. Socrates says to Crito:

Pay no attention to the practitioners of *philosophia*, whether good or bad; when you have tested the thing itself finely and well, if it seems to you to be a poor thing (*phaulon*), then turn every man away from it, not only your sons. But if it seems to you to be what I think it is, then take heart, pursue it, practice it, both you and your children, as the proverb says.

Euthyd. 307b–c

What is the type of *philosophhein* that Socrates recommends? One might propose that Socrates' *philosophhein* searches for the truth while the brothers' does not. If so, one must specify: the truth about what? Forster argues convincingly that Socrates does not seek the truth that would be the content of important ethical knowledge:

The motive of verifying and disseminating the god's message of universal human ignorance in ethics seems to forbid us from attributing to Socrates in his mature philosophical [*sic*] activity any intention of achieving ethical knowledge.

FORSTER 2006, 19

It might seem against this, however, that sometimes Socrates does seek important knowledge. For example, he says,

I question on all these matters not for the sake of anything else than wishing to consider (*skepsasthai*) however matters about virtue hold (*pôs pot' echei*) and what it is itself, virtue.

Prt. 360e6–361a1

Yet if “consider” here amounts to “examine,” as distinct from “arrive at final answers,” then Socrates can have simply the modest goal of revealing the interlocutor’s condition (the result that Nicias and Theodorus describe).¹³

In the *Euthydemus* Socrates pursues some value in this type of *philosophia* that is one-on-one verbal contest.

10 *Philosophia in the Gorgias*

When in the *Gorgias* Callicles asks if Socrates’ proposals do not entail that everything Callicles does is the opposite of what he should do (481c), Socrates replies:

I am a lover of *philosophia* ... And don’t wonder that I say these things, but stop my darling *philosophia* from saying these things. For she always says ... what you now hear from me.

Grg. 481d–482b

Socrates thus claims *philosophia* as his own activity. Readers learn only later at 487c what *philosophia* refers to. Socrates has previously heard Callicles advising against *philosophein* (487c). When Callicles reproaches Socrates for *philosophia* (484d–486a), Callicles means refuting (484c–487d). Socrates’ word *philosophia* at 481d echoes Callicles’ word reported at 487c. The *philosophia* that Socrates claims as his is refutation.

11 *Philosophia in the Phaedo*

In the *Phaedo* Socrates says that *philosophia* has been his life’s work (60c–61a). But there is some question about what he refers to by *philosophia*. Socrates in the *Phaedo* suggests several different accounts of *philosophia*.

The first appearance of *philosophia* in the *Phaedo* is in Phaedo’s report that the discussions on Socrates’ last day were “in *philosophia* as was usual for us” (59a). Phaedo’s “us” includes those whom he names as present. Among them are Apollodorus, Crito, Hermogenes, Ctesippus, Menexenus, Euclides, and Terpsion (59b–c), whom Plato depicts in other dialogues (*Symposium*, *Crito*, *Cratylus*, *Euthydemus*, *Lysis*, *Menexenus*, and *Theaetetus*) either in conversation

13 According to Forster 2006, 41, we see Socrates in the aporetic dialogues “realizing his highest philosophical [*sic*] ambitions: demonstrating people’s ethical ignorance.”

with Socrates or reporting it. For them *philosophia* is “usual.” If Phaedo is aware of the variety of such conversations, he includes many topics within *philosophia*.

When Socrates first speaks the word *philosophia* in the *Phaedo* (61a), he implies that he has been doing *philosophia* his entire life. Certain dreams had urged, “Socrates, make music (*mousikên*, the craft of the Muses) and work at it” (60e). He had thought that *philosophia* was “the greatest music,” and that the dream thus urged doing what he was already doing (61a). Since Socrates soon refers to his defense speech (63b), and since readers will recall the *Apology*, in which Socrates called examining *philosophhein* (28e), readers might naturally assume that the life-long *philosophia* Socrates claims here is his examining.

However, Socrates then says several things that do not fit the assumption that the *philosophos* is an examiner. First, Socrates leaves the message for Evenus, “follow me as quickly as possible,” implying that Evenus should die. When Simmias protests that Evenus won’t want to do that, Socrates says:

Why? Isn’t Evenus a *philosophos*? Then Evenus will be willing and everyone [will be willing] who worthily (*axiôs*) shares in this business (*pragmatou*).

Phd. 61c

Socrates implies that: (i) as a *philosophos* Evenus should be willing to die; and (ii) a *philosophos* like Evenus is someone who “shares worthily in this business” (namely, *philosophia*). Socrates subsequently often uses adverbs besides “worthily” to qualify a type of engagement in *philosophia*: “a man who has really (*tôi ontî*) spent his life in *philosophia*” (63e–64a); “those who touch correctly (*orthôs*, “strictly”) on *philosophia*” (64a); “those really doing *philosophhein*” (64b); “those truly (*hôs alêthôs*) *philosophoi*” (64b9); “those legitimately (*gnêsiôs*) *philosophoi*” (66b). These adverbially qualified *philosophoi* are a smaller group within those in *philosophia*. These “legitimately *philosophoi*” (66b) say that because of the body they lack leisure for *philosophia* (66d1–2); “really truly because of the body it is not ever possible for us to think (*phronêsai*) anything” (66c4–5). Since Simmias has just agreed that the most true and accurate thinking (*dianoieisthai*, 65e8) is of what good is, what the fine is, and that sort of thing (65e–66a), Socrates’ verb “think” (*phronêsai*) here is perhaps restricted to such thinking. It is clearly this select group of “truly” and “legitimately” *philosophoi* that Socrates focuses on here even when he does not include a qualifying adverb. (I note that such qualifiers select out a subgroup but do not inevitably commend it: we might speak of “true scoundrels.”) This

philosophos, “differently from other men” (65a) “most disdains the body and flees from it” (65d–e). These *philosophoi* say to one another that while they live they will be closest to knowing (*eidenai*) if they are pure as much as possible (*kathareuomen*) from the body until god himself releases them (67a3–6), presumably by death. In these passages *philosophia* involves the desire to escape from the contemptible body, for example by dying. “Those strictly *philosophoi* practice for dying” (67e). One really (*tôi onti*) a *philosophos* must believe that he will encounter thought (*phronêsei*) purely (*katharôs*, 68b4) only in Hades (68b1).

Cebes and Simmias agree that this sort of thing is what the legitimately *philosophoi* say. Readers see that the Socrates of the *Phaedo* is therefore not one of the “legitimately *philosophoi*.” He could not say consistently that he lacks leisure for *philosophia*. He has been working at *philosophia* his entire life (60e–61a).

Even if we suppose that the *Phaedo*'s Socrates is like the Socrates of other dialogues in that the bodily beauty of the young men whose company he seeks often stuns him at least momentarily (*Chrm.* 154b9–10, 155c5–e2; *Eras.* 133a3–5), it is nevertheless inaccurate to say, of that Socrates, that, because of the body, “truly it is really not possible ever to think (*phronêsai*) anything” (66c4–5). Socrates has always (100b1) not at all (*ouden*, 100b2) stopped talking about the “much babbled about” (*poluthrulêta*, 100b5) items such as the fine itself by itself.

But now surprisingly at *Phaedo* 69c it appears that Socrates actually does claim to “correctly engage in *philosophhein*.” Of certain people he has just described as “purified” (69b) from illusory virtue by thoughtfulness (*phronêsis*)” (69c) he says:

These in my view are none other than those who have engaged in *philosophhein* (*pephilosophêkotes*) correctly (*orthôs*)—to become one of whom I have as much as possible left off nothing in my life, but was eager in every way.

Phd. 69d1–4

What precedes this statement, however, shows that Socrates is no longer talking about the same sort of pure (68b4) and correct *philosophoi* that he spoke of up to 68b. The purified people of 69b–c have been purified of illusory virtue, for example an illusory courage that faces the fearfulness of death because of fear of something else (perhaps shame). Thoughtfulness (*phronêsis*) is a means of purification (*katharmos*, 69c1–2) from illusory virtue. The way Socrates

now understands purification results from his new interpretation of what the creators of initiation rites (*teletas*) had in mind, when they said in a ridiculing way:

Whoever arrives there [in Hades] ... purified (*kekatharmenos*) and initiated (*tetelesmenos*) will have a home with the gods.

Phd. 69c6–7

These purified people he now describes have been purified before their arrival in Hades. Hence the *phronêsis* that purifies them is a *phronêsis* that one can have in this lifetime.¹⁴ Then those “having engaged correctly in *philosophhein*” (69d1), to be among whom Socrates has had a lifelong aim (69d1–4), must now be interpreted, in accord with his reinterpretation of purification, as those purified by *phronêsis* before death. They are not those waiting for purification in death. They are thus not the “correctly in *philosophia*” of 63a–68b or those *philosophoi* of 68b1–4 that believe they will encounter thought purely only in Hades.

What explains why the *Phaedo*’s Socrates gives these accounts of the *philosophos* is the circumstance that he is responding to his stricken friends’ request (62e–63b) that he show them that he should be untroubled about dying. He introduces his speech as a defense to be made “more persuasively” than his defense in court (63b). He emphasizes that it is a new defense when he concludes with “I make my defense” (*apologoumai*, 69d). He emphasizes that this new defense is persuasive for his particular audience when he says, “For most people it induces disbelief” (69e). He implies that his present audience is unlike “most people.” His present audience will believe him. Since he inserted much questioning about *philosophoi* into his present speech, Cebes’ and Simmias’ assents give them much ownership of the speech up to Socrates’ reinterpretation of initiation at 69c.

For a third time in the *Phaedo* at 91a Socrates apparently treats himself as a *philosophos*, but the attribute he mentions for a *philosophos* differs from his previous attributions. Speaking about misology (89d–90d), he says it would be pitiable if a man hated argument when there was a good one to be found.

14 Rowe 1993, 151, translating *phronêsis* by “wisdom,” says on 69c1: “‘Wisdom’ here, however, is not the complete understanding of things which was talked about earlier (since that was said to be inaccessible to the philosopher [*sic*] while still alive) but simply a clear-minded appreciation of what is truly valuable.”

Let's not admit into our soul the thought that there's a chance that there is nothing sound in arguments, but much rather that we are not yet in a sound condition.... There is a chance that I at present am not in the condition of a *philosophos* (*philosophôs echein*) about this very topic, but like the untaught [am in the condition of] loving victory. For they, whenever they dispute about something, do not consider how what the argument is about holds, but they are eager about how the things that they propose will seem to those present. But I will not be eager about how what I say will seem true to those present ... but that as much as possible it will seem to hold thus to me myself.

Phd. 90d–91b

Here the condition of a *philosophos* according to Socrates is being eager to say what will seem so to himself on what the argument is about. This condition does not imply a wish to dissociate oneself from the body by death.

If we apply to Socrates here the report of Nicias and Theodorus that in every conversation what the argument is about is the state of the *psuchê* of his interlocutor, then that state—rather than one's state after death—is Socrates' concern in the *Phaedo*.

12 Friendly Observers Associate Socrates with *Philosophia*

Compare the passages just considered in which Socrates associates himself with *philosophia* to ascriptions of *philosophia* to Socrates by friendly observers.

Eudicus in the *Hippias Minor* considers Socrates to engage in *philosophia*. He expects Socrates to refute (363a).

Alcibiades in the *Symposium* refers to *philosophia* when he drunkenly explains the effect of his beloved Socrates.

I am feeling what people feel when they've been bitten by a snake ... as I've been by something more painful, and in the most painful place one could be bitten—because it's in my heart, or my soul, or whatever one's supposed to call it, that I've been stricken and bitten by the words that *philosophia* brings with her, which bite into you more fiercely than a snake.

Symp. 217e6–218a6, tr. Rowe

Philosophia as Alcibiades understands it is humiliating, clearly the refuting he experiences under Socrates' questioning.

Parmenides in the *Parmenides* observes Plato's Socrates as a youngster. With his challenging question to Zeno ("Don't you acknowledge," 128e), Socrates presents himself as ready to duel on items such as likeness itself that are "taken up in reasoning" (*en tois logismôis lambanomenois*, 130a), forms (130a) such as likeness itself (130b). Parmenides in turn questions Socrates on such items. After Socrates quickly resists acknowledging a form of undignified things like mud (130c), Parmenides comments that *philosophia* has not gripped Socrates as it will grip him in the future (130e). Parmenides evidently thinks that Socrates is already partly into *philosophia* and that one fully gripped by it will not resist a form of mud as undignified.

After Socrates cannot withstand Parmenides' detailed questioning, Parmenides comments that if someone (135b) after these difficulties "won't allow forms," he (i) "won't have anywhere to turn his thought"; and (ii) "will destroy the possibility (*dunamin*) of *dialegesthai*" (135c). Parmenides then asks Socrates (iii) "What then will you do about *philosophia*?" (135c). Parmenides' question has many implications about *philosophia* that I cannot pursue here. I stress its implication that *philosophia* and *dialegesthai*—the dueling to which the young Socrates challenged Zeno—are closely connected.

13 Socrates Does Not Claim for Himself the *Philosophia* He Describes in the *Republic*

It is beyond the scope of this essay to consider all the varied explanations of *philosoph-* stem words that appear in Plato's dialogues. I select for consideration now some types of *philosophia* explained in Plato's dialogues that Socrates does not and could not claim as his *philosophia*.

In *Republic* Books 5–7 Socrates gives a famous account of the *philosophos* to assuage Glaucon's shock (473e–474b) at Socrates' proposal that the human race will have no rest from evils until *philosophoi* rule (473c–d). Socrates' lengthy account (473–540) is novel. Socrates does not mean by *philosophoi* those whom the masses think of (499e–500a). At 540d Socrates recalls his shocking proposal that *philosophoi* should rule with the phrasing "when true *philosophoi* become rulers." We then understand that the *philosophoi* of whom Socrates gives an account between 473 and 540 are this select group, "true *philosophoi*." Some points from that account are these. (i) The only people one might correctly (*orthôs*) call *philosophoi* (476b) are those rare people (476c) who are able to approach the beautiful itself. (ii) Those passionately devoted to each being itself one must call *philosophoi* (480a). (iii) "True *philosophia*" is

the ascent to what is (521c). (iv) Expertise in discussion (*dialektikê*, 532b) leads to a grasp of the being of each thing itself (532a, 534b). (v) The true *philosophoi* (540d) who are suited to be leaders in a city will have a special education culminating in seeing the good itself (540a–b). (vi) A person who is synoptic (*synoptikos*, with a comprehensive or systematic overview) has the capacity for *dialektikê* (537b–d).

The Socrates of the *Republic* lacks many of the attributes that crucially characterize the specially trained *philosophos*-ruler of Book 7 (starting with the special training). The special training is to produce a person with *philosophos*-thought (*philosophou dianoias*, 527b9). I dwell on just one of Socrates' deficiencies. He is not *dialektikos*: he is not an expert in *dialegesthai*.

Glaucon agrees that the special education for the children that are rulers-to-be will emphasize training in *dialegesthai*. That education will be one "from which they will be able to question (*erôtan*) and answer (*apokrinesthai*) most knowledgeably" (534b9–10). Glaucon agrees specifically about the expertise of answering questions when Socrates asks:

You call *dialektikon* the one grasping the account (*logos*) of the being of each thing? And the one not able, in so far as he is not able to give an account (*logon didonai*) to himself and to another, you will say does not have understanding (*noun*) about this?

Resp. 534b3–6

And even more specifically Glaucon assents when Socrates asks about the ability to answer what the good is:

Whoever is not able to define (*diorisesthai*) with an account distinguishing the idea of the good from all others, and as if in battle ... going through all examinations (*elegchôn*) comes through all these with the account unfallen, you will say that the one in this condition does not know the good itself nor anything else good?

Resp. 534b8–c5

We are reminded by the talk of education for questioning and answering that *dialektikê*, expertise in *dialegesthai*, has two halves: expertise in questioning and expertise in answering. (Thus Hermogenes at *Cratylus* 390 agrees that he calls *dialektikos* one who knows how to ask and answer questions.) The Socrates of the *Republic* lacks one half of the expertise. He is no expert in answering. Thrasymachus grumbles (336c, 337e) that Socrates does not want

to answer.¹⁵ Socrates implies (337e) that he does not answer when he does not profess to know. Nor does Socrates claim to have that crucial half of *dialektikê* in any of Plato's dialogues.¹⁶ We see in the *Hippias Major* that even the mature Socrates does not have expertise at answering. He fails at answering himself. His talents are as a questioner.¹⁷

The Socrates Plato depicts in the *Republic* then cannot be the "true *philosophos*" of the *Republic*.

14 The Socrates of the *Theaetetus* is Not the *Philosophos* He Describes in the *Theaetetus* Digression

Theaetetus 172c–177c, a "digression" (177b), implies an account of those that spend much time in *philosophia* (172c) or are *philosophoi* (175e). (i) Such a *philosophos*, thinking that city matters are little or nothing, despises them (173e), and flies off geometrizing and astronomizing, condescending to none of the things nearby (173e–174a). (ii) His neighbor and the person nearby really escapes his notice (174b). (iii) He doesn't notice what his neighbor is doing or whether he is a man, but asks "What is man?" The latter part of the passage 176a–177c does not use *philosoph-* stem words, but continues to describe the *philosophos* of 172–176. It advises him to become as much like a god as possible (176a–c), to avoid the penalty that "when he dies the place that is pure of all evil will not receive him" (177a).

The *philosophos* of the *Theaetetus* in his contempt for particular human matters is not the Socrates of the *Theaetetus* who is so interested in his young

15 Similarly, Hippias in Xenophon grumbles at Socrates, "You laugh at others, questioning and refuting them all, but are yourself willing neither to sustain a statement (*hupechein logon*) nor to declare a judgment about anything" (*Mem.* 4.4.9).

16 Moreover, he alludes to many defeats at *Theaetetus* 169b6–8: "Already countless Heracleses and Theseuses strong at speaking that have met me have pounded me exceedingly well." Readers see none of his defeats in Plato's dialogues except for Socrates' defeat by himself in the *Hippias Major*.

17 Aristotle says: "Socrates asked questions, but did not answer, for he admitted that he did not know" (*Soph. el.* 183b7). The Socrates of the Platonic *Theages* says that the only thing he knows is *tôn erôtikôn*, and in those matters he is made out to be ("I am fancied," Bailly 2004) "terrific in comparison to anyone among past human beings or present ones" (*Thg.* 128b). Commentators think Socrates here claims expertise in matters having to do with *erôs*. But since Socrates immediately describes how Aristides reported that after spending time with Socrates he was able to *dialogesthai* with anyone (130c2–3) and to appear inferior to no one in arguments (130c3), it seems at least as likely that Socrates here alludes to a reputation for questioning (*erôtan*) as that he alludes to *erôs*.

neighbors (143d) and whose lengthy conversation with Theaetetus displays intensely personal interest in that particular young neighbor.

15 Socrates Recognizes Different Types of *Philosophos*

When Theodorus in the *Sophist* says that the Eleatic visitor is “very much a *philosophos*” (216a), Socrates responds,

Perhaps this person accompanies you from among our betters (*tôn kreittonôn*) and will look on at us (*epopsomenos*) who are inferior (*phaulous*) in arguments and will refute us (*elegxôn*), he being a god with refutative skill (*elegktikos*).

Sph. 216b

Socrates here immediately thinks that a *philosophos* refutes. However, Socrates then shows awareness that the word *philosophos* is used for several types. After Theodorus has said that *philosophoi* are divine (216c), Socrates says:

Probably it's not much easier ... to distinguish that type (*genos*) than [to distinguish] that of the god. Certainly the real (*ontôs*) *philosophoi* that haunt our cities—in contrast to the fictional (*plastôs*, that is, onstage) ones—take on all sorts of different appearances just because of other people's ignorance. Looking down (*kathorôntes*) from on high (*hupsóthen*) to life below them, they even seem to some to be worth nothing, to others worth everything. And sometimes they appear statesmen and sometimes sophists, and sometimes they create the opinion that they are completely crazy.

Sph. 216c–d

Here Socrates notices several different references for the word *philosophos*. The varied “real *philosophoi*” he mentions are alike in that they “look down” from some height on others.

We have already seen that the Socrates of the *Phaedo* is not the *Phaedo*'s “legitimately” *philosophos*. The Socrates of the *Republic* is not the specially educated and *dialektikos* person that Socrates describes as the *philosophos* in the *Republic*. The Socrates of the *Theaetetus* is not the *philosophos* unaware of his neighbors that Socrates describes in the *Theaetetus*. Similarly, Plato's Socrates in the *Sophist* is not the *philosophos* that Socrates describes there who looks down on others from above. Rather, the Socrates of the *Sophist* is the same as the Socrates of the *Theaetetus* who arranged the next day's meeting (210d4)

that is the conversation of the *Sophist*. He is then the same as the Socrates who wanted to be friendly with his particular interlocutors in the *Theaetetus* (146a) and who is on his way to deal with matters about his upcoming trial (210d1–3). So he is clearly the same as the Socrates of the *Apology* that went to everyone like a father or older brother (31b4–5). He is not a disdainful distant observer.

Imagine a reader who supposes, differently from me, that the Socrates of, for example, the *Republic* or *Theaetetus* recommends the types of *philosophia* that involve expertise in *dialegesthai* and no particular interest in one's neighbors. To suppose so raises some questions. Why would Plato's Socrates recommend practices Socrates does not display in the dialogues in which he describes these synoptically viewing or god-imitating *philosophoi*? Why, moreover, would the Socrates of these dialogues recommend practices very alien to the practice of the Socrates of the *Apology*—alien in that they could not involve the personal insight that would enable acting as a father or elder brother, not to mention biting into anyone's particular soul (*Symp.* 217e–218a)? To answer these questions my imagined reader might propose a hypothesis that Plato portrays in the *Republic* and *Theaetetus* a character quite different from the Socrates of the *Apology*.¹⁸ The hypothesis is that the author Plato now uses a quite different character still named “Socrates” to convey Plato's new insight that an activity Plato now calls *philosophia* is more valuable than the *philosophhein* that Socrates claims in the *Apology*.¹⁹ Plato's new *philosophia* would now be some combination (if a coherent combination is possible) of the *philosophia* in the *Republic*, *Phaedo*, and *Theaetetus* digression. I have not considered the *Phaedrus*. Its several occurrences of *philosoph-* stem words are worth reflection.²⁰

Reflecting on the indications that the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* identify their Socrates with the Socrates of the *Apology* and on the fact that the Socrates of the dialogues in which he describes the new and enormously ambitious *philosophia* does not himself practice it, other readers will find another explanatory hypothesis preferable.

Their preferred explanation will be that Plato's Socrates, one and the same conversationalist, recognizes various current uses of *philosophia* and deploys or even molds those uses in conversation to reveal his interlocutors. This new *philosophia* is perfectly suited to appeal to, and thus reveal, interlocutors to whom he describes it.

18 Vlastos 1991, 45–80, and 53 (“unSocratic and antiSocratic conclusions”).

19 Kahn 2012, 161 says, “I take it that philosophy [*sic*] for Plato means the pursuit of a unified view.” Kahn presumably means by “unified view,” “unified view of whatever there is.”

20 Moore 2015 is a useful study of these.

Like some interlocutors, some of Plato's readers may be charmed to reserve the word *philosophia* for the most powerful, advanced, synoptic, systematic, and godlike thinking available only to a gifted few. I leave open the question whether Plato claimed that sort of *philosophia* as his goal. I confine myself to the observation that Plato's Socrates does not claim it as his practice. The only kind of *philosophēin* that Plato's Socrates clearly claims as his practice throughout the dialogues is the personal conversation concerned with care for the interlocutor's character that Socrates describes in the *Apology*. It is the soul-stripping that those that know him, such as Nicias, Theodorus, and Alcibiades, describe. We readers, as we read and react, undergo it.

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Antisthenes' Portrayal of Socrates

Menahem Luz

Socrates' character is often identified with the haunting image dramatized so vividly in the dialogues of Plato and Xenophon. Yet a somewhat different image emerges from the fragments of Antisthenes of Athens (c. 446–366 BCE).¹ Celebrated as an author of philosophical dialogues himself, Antisthenes was considered by many ancients to have been the “true” representative of Socrates' philosophy.² To whatever extent their claim was correct, it is the purpose of the present chapter to examine whether Antisthenes' presentation of Socrates' thought can be taken as a serious counter-image to that found in Plato and Xenophon. I will open by discussing the extent to which Antisthenes had a longer and more personal acquaintance with Socrates than either of these two writers. We will then examine the role of his own philosophical scheme in the interpretation of his teacher's thought. The third section of this chapter will analyze the method of argumentation adopted by him in his lost dialogues. Although Socrates was not a principle speaker in most of them, a reconstruction of their style and structure may reveal how Antisthenes expected the characters in them to interact. In this respect too, his method of composition can be clearly contrasted with that of Plato and Xenophon.³ The final section will examine those fragments of his dialogues where Socrates is specifically portrayed. Throughout, I will attempt to show how Antisthenes gives an alternative account of his teacher's example.

1 Fragments edited and annotated in Prince 2015 (with English translation); *SSR* v A and vol. 4.195–419. I confine my analysis only to testimonies citing Antisthenes by name and not to speculated references to him in the writings of Plato and other writers.

2 *Frr.* 43A–B, 44A. This view has sometimes been adopted in modern times (Popper 1966, 194; Meijer 2017, 22) and even critics of Popper grant Antisthenes a pivotal place in the Socratic tradition (Wild 1953, 29–30).

3 Although I will compare his method of argumentation to that of Plato and Xenophon, it is worth noting the works of other first-generation Socratics, including Aeschines of Sphettus (*SSR* vi A), Aristippus of Cyrene (iv A), and Euclid of Megara (ii A). On the differences between them and the schools, see Field 1967, 158–74; Kahn 1998, 1–35; Döring 2011, 27–45; Zilioli 2015, xiii–xx.

1 Antisthenes' Acquaintance with Socrates

In many ways, Antisthenes was not only longer but also better acquainted with Socrates than either Plato or Xenophon. Almost a generation older than them,⁴ he had befriended their teacher when they were still children.⁵ Thereafter, Socrates was said to have considered Antisthenes one of his inseparable followers, allegedly conversing with him on a daily basis.⁶ Furthermore, Antisthenes' account of Socrates' actions during this period was at least partially based on personal recollection.⁷ By contrast, Plato and Xenophon knew Socrates best in his later years and their account of this earlier period was derivative when not simply invented.⁸ From a social point of view, Antisthenes was also much closer to his teacher than those two members of the wealthy gentry. Like Socrates, Antisthenes was of modest means, with origins in the industrial port of Piraeus.⁹ From there he is said to have made the strenuous journey to the city on foot each day in order to converse with his teacher.¹⁰ Later anecdotes spoke of a personal rivalry and friction between Antisthenes and Plato (fr. 147–149).

- 4 Antisthenes was fifteen to twenty years older than both Plato (b. 429/423 BCE) and Xenophon (b. 430/425 BCE). See Kahn 1998, 4–9; Badian 2004, 33–40; Prince 2015, 46–119.
- 5 He first studied, then taught, sophistic rhetoric (DL 6.1–2), but became a pupil of Socrates by at least 422 BCE (fr. 82), when his conversation in Xen. *Symp.* 4.34–45 was supposedly held (Prince 2015, 285). Moreover, he must have been aware of Socrates' philosophical activity when his teacher was lampooned in Aristophanes' *Clouds* (performed 423 BCE) and probably earlier when Socrates noticed Antisthenes' courage at the Battle of Tanagra (426 BCE; fr. 3A = DL 6.1).
- 6 Socrates was said to have remarked that Antisthenes never left his side (Xen. *Mem.* 3.11.17), hence perhaps the later tradition that they met daily (fr. 12A = DL 6.2). Plato includes Antisthenes as a silent member of the group surrounding Socrates on the day of his execution (*Phd.* 59b = fr. 20A), from which Plato and other followers were absent.
- 7 He praised Socrates' action at the Battle of Delion in 424 BCE (fr. 200) and may even have witnessed it if Socrates' remark about Antisthenes' courage at the Battle of Tanagra mistakenly referred to the same campaign (Prince 2015, 34).
- 8 Plato's account of Socrates' military exploits (*Symp.* 221a) was written partly in response to Xenophon's *Symposium* (Danzig 2005, 331–357) and to Antisthenes (Luz 2014, 9–22; Prince 2015, 256), to whom Xenophon also responds (fr. 103C = *Mem.* 1.2.19).
- 9 Fr. 81A, 82 (34). He may not have been as poor (*penês*) as Xenophon makes him claim to be (*Symp.* 3.8), but rather of merchant (fr. 6) or *metic* family; still, he was forced to earn a living before he met Socrates (Prince 2015, 45–6, 278–81). It is unlikely that he was a son of the wealthy Antisthenes of Cytherus (discussion in Nails 2002, 35–6), since his asides refer to moderate means (fr. 82), though he probably never lived in Cynic penury, as later admirers claimed.
- 10 Fr. 12A = DL 6.2. In contrast to the equestrian class of Xenophon and Plato, Antisthenes and Socrates had been hoplite foot-soldiers and anecdotes dwell on the lengthy walking abilities of both.

Whatever their truth, Plato himself makes no explicit reference to Antisthenes' contribution to philosophical discussion, barely mentioning his existence among Socrates' companions.¹¹ Xenophon, on the other hand, does give a long and detailed account of Antisthenes' active participation in conversations with Socrates. He has Antisthenes described as acknowledging a philosophical debt to his teacher, claiming to have learned from him the value of true friendship.¹² We must remember, however, that Xenophon does not depict a specific conversation held in the distant past, but rather invents an imaginary dialogue to present ideas associated with Socrates and his companions in general.¹³ Still, it is unlikely that he would have put concepts into Antisthenes' mouth that completely contradicted what was generally known of him.¹⁴ Whatever the exact origin of Xenophon's account, he obviously recognizes Antisthenes' early and intimate place among Socrates' followers.

Within a generation of his death, some considered Antisthenes the only Socratic writer worthy of admiration.¹⁵ Although few of his compositions were in fact Socratic dialogues,¹⁶ his presentation of Socrates' philosophy of friendship and wealth of spirit led many early Cynics to imagine that he was one of the founding figures of their own philosophy of penury and social harmony.¹⁷ Antisthenes was thus made into a pivotal link between Socrates and thinkers of the Greco-Roman period.¹⁸

11 Admittedly this is true of Plato's treatment of several other Socratics as well (Tsouna 2015, 3–5) and it is unclear why some and not others.

12 Xen. *Symp.* 3.7, 4.34, 62, 63; *Mem.* 2.5.1.

13 Xenophon is often judged a mere imitator of Plato and Antisthenes (Kahn 1998, 393–401; Huss 1999, 18), although his originality has recently been defended (Dorion 2014, 291–292; Chernyakhovskaya 2014, 4–7). It is also suggested that his encounter with Callias in Corinth in 371 BCE (Xen. *Hell.* 6.3.3–4) may have inspired the general topic of Callias' banquet in Xen. *Symp.* (Nails 2002, 72 [s.v. Callias 111]; Prince 2015, 285), though we should not forget that this work is not a recollection of an actual event from his early childhood, but inventive sympotic literature.

14 Antisthenes' works continued to be read long after, arousing both critical interest in Aristotle as well as admiration among his "Antisthenean" followers (Arist. *Metaph.* H.4 1043b23 = fr. 150A 4, 150B 1).

15 Theopompus of Chios (378/7–c. 320 BCE) composed an anti-Platonic diatribe, where Antisthenes was admired not only for the clever (*deinos*) acumen and harmony (*homilia*) of his philosophical discourse, but also as the only (*monos*) Socratic author who was worthy of praise (fr. 22A = DL 6.14).

16 Some were rhetorical speeches and others were discourses on what we would now call logic and metaphysics. Cf. fr. 22A, 42, 43B (= DL 6.14, 2.61, 64). See Suvák 2014, 72–120; Prince 2015, 179; Brancacci 2015, 43–45.

17 Fr. 22A (DL 6.13–14). Discussion in Branham and Goulet-Cazé 1996, 6–7; Long 1996, 31–41; 2005, 623–9; 2006, 58–9.

18 Discussions of various aspects of his influence in Suvák 2014, especially Fuentes Gonzáles 2014, 54–5.

2 Antisthenes' Portrayal of Socrates

Although the portrayal of Socrates' character by his disciples has a direct bearing on the largely insoluble question of what that philosopher was originally like,¹⁹ we will here confine ourselves to examining how and why Antisthenes presented his teacher's thought in the way that he did.²⁰ In principle, the portrait of Socrates in his disciples' works reflects not only what they absorbed from his thought, but also the extent to which they tailored their accounts to convey a new philosophical message to their readers.²¹ Even Aristotle noticed this distinction between Plato's thought and the philosophy of the historical Socrates.²² While much of Aristotle's knowledge of Socrates was based on Plato, he was aware of the writings of other Socratic writers as well.²³ What has interested modern scholars is the way in which Plato and Xenophon transformed their master's image when they composed a Socratic dialogue.²⁴ Something similar may explain the portrayal of Socrates in the fragments of Antisthenes. The moral qualities used to describe his teacher were precisely those that characterize Antisthenes' own philosophy: Socrates'

19 Waterfield 2004, 86–93 and more negatively, Dorion 2011, 20–1.

20 Scholars have long attempted to unravel Socrates' character by extracting what is common to ancient accounts of his doctrine (Guthrie 1971, 7–9; Stone 1989, 9–19; Brickhouse and Smith 1991, 45–62), his dialectical method (Gulley 1968, 1–74), and thought (Gigon 1947, 7–68; Taylor 1953, 131–73). However, not only does Aristophanes' critique of Socrates contradict the idealization of him in Plato and Xenophon (Vander Waerd 1994, 49–86), but the Socratic writers themselves often disagree on important aspects of his character (Guthrie 1971, 5–28; Dorion 2011, 1–23).

21 On the origins of the Socratic dialogue, see Redfield 2018, 125–40. On Plato's presentation of Socrates, see the articles in Press 2000, 15–82, 201–34; on that of other Socratics, see Clay 1994, 23–47; Kahn 1998, 1–18; Zilioli 2015, 1–142. Although Plato may have often identified with the views ascribed to Socrates in his dialogues (Rowe 2009, 20), scholars sometimes loosely identify the historical Socrates' thought with its presentation in Plato or some other Socratic writer without drawing a clear distinction between master and pupil (e.g., the articles listed in Boudouris 1991, 9–10; Vlastos 1997, ch. 2; Kofman 1998, 1–31).

22 He distinguishes between Socrates' views on universals and Plato's own ontological theory (*Metaph.* A.6 987b1–14, M.4 1078b23–4, 9 1086b2–5), that was nonetheless expressed through the character of "Socrates" in the dialogues (Ross 1924, xxxvi–xxxvii; Dorion 2011, 11 n. 29). His distinction may even have been indicated lexically ("Fitzgerald's canon"), though this usage may not be as hard and fast as originally suggested (Ross 1924, xxxix–xl). See further Smith 2018, 601–22; Moore (in this volume), 175.

23 Dorion 2011, 11. In his analysis of the literary origins of the Socratic dialogue, Aristotle refers to a multiplicity of *logoi* about Socrates (*Poet.* 1447b11), intending not only those of Plato but other authors as well (Murphy 2013, 316, n. 13).

24 On "Plato" reinterpretation of Socrates," see Rutherford 1995, ch. 2; Kahn 1998, 95–100; Hintikka 2007, 2–3. Reappraisals of Xenophon's inventive recreation of Socrates are in Chernyakhovskaya 2014, 4–7; Dorion 2014, 291–2. On Antisthenes' interpretation of Socrates, see Suvák 2014, 72–120; Brancacci 2015, 43–60.

inner strength (*to karterikon*, fr. 12A) and wealth (*ploutos*) of spirit (fr. 82). There Socrates resembles a wise counselor rather than the argumentative figure of Plato's so-called "aporetic" dialogues.²⁵

While Antisthenes' presentation of Socrates' philosophy in dialogue form was common to that of other Socratic writers, he differed from them in a number of important points. His dialogues encompassed imaginary conversations held not only between Socrates and his contemporaries, but also between characters of semi-historical and mythological origin.²⁶ This breadth of style meant that Antisthenes was like Xenophon: a much more diversified writer than Plato and one more difficult to define.²⁷ Moreover, he appears to have adopted a style of dialogue distinct from either writer. While each of Plato's dialogues purportedly describes a separate conversation held between Socrates and various contemporaries,²⁸ Xenophon is best known for composing collections of assorted conversations held between them.²⁹ By contrast with both, Antisthenes' style was less unified and, as we shall see, more episodic in structure, citing snippets of conversations in order to exemplify Socrates' character.

3 Antisthenes' Rhetorical Style

An important element of Antisthenes' method of argumentation was the use of rhetoric, and in this he stands in clear contrast to Plato. Ancient accounts of Antisthenes' life relate that prior to having met Socrates he gave lessons in sophistic oratory (fr. 12B–C). Whether these stories are late fiction or not,

25 These often end with a portrayal of Socrates caught in a philosophical impasse (Gulley 1968, 22–61; Kahn 1998, 95–100) that may reflect Plato's own uncertainty concerning the value of sensation and the definition of virtue in rather than that of the historical Socrates (Vander Waerd 1994, 9–10; Kahn 1998, 1–2; Hintikka 2007, 2–3).

26 E.g., between Heracles and Prometheus, Achilles and Chiron, and King Cyrus and his courtiers (Prince 2015, 144–5).

27 Plato was "limited to the Socratic form" (Clay 1994, 28) in contrast to Antisthenes, who composed not only dialogues, but also speeches in the style of the sophists as well as discursive analyses that attracted the critical attention of Aristotle.

28 This is also true of those dialogues introduced by a brief conversation supposedly held subsequent to the main discussion of the dialogue (e.g., *Phd.* 57a–59e; *Tht.* 142a–143c; *Symp.* 172a–173e). The same was probably true of Aeschines' dialogues, whose fragments indicate brief introductions where Socrates narrated the dialogues some time after they were originally held (Döring 2011, 28–33; Lampe 2015, 61–67).

29 *Xen. Mem.* 1–4. Although his *Symposium* comprises a collection of separate conversations, it is purportedly a record of a single event (Callias' banquet). The Socratic conversations in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* are more unified structurally, but less dramatic in form.

our sources note how his dialogues and even discursive works reflected the rhetorical style of the sophist giant, Gorgias of Leontini (c. 485–c. 380 BCE). In fact, we can detect the influence of Gorgias' mythological themes and language in many of Antisthenes' surviving fragments.³⁰ However, Antisthenes' belief in the absolute value of morality was in no way compatible with Gorgias' relativistic if not nihilist mode of thought.³¹ His theory of moral education may even have been attacked by Gorgias' illustrious pupil, the rhetorician Isocrates.³² On the other hand, the very adoption of sophistic rhetoric as a viable method of argumentation sets Antisthenes in sharp contrast to Plato. While it is true that Plato sometimes composed speeches for the character of Socrates to deliver in his dialogues, these tend to be either in the form of parody or, if of more serious intent, expositions of myths subservient to dialectical *logos*.³³ More importantly, Plato portrays Socrates as consistently critical of the sophists and the philosophy of rhetoric associated with Gorgias and Protagoras in particular. There Socrates attempts to solve philosophical problems through a process of cross-examination of his companions by means of short questions and even briefer answers (*brachulogia*) rather than by means of instruction given in the longer lecture (*makrologia*) format associated with the leading sophists.³⁴ Although Plato later experimented with other ways to solve Socrates' *aporia*, he still presented these new methods as viable alternatives to the sophists' method of rhetoric.³⁵ Antisthenes' fragments, on the other hand,

30 Ancient sources said that Antisthenes' dialogue *Truth* was composed in a "rhetorical style" (Prince 2015, 147–8), as were his series of *Protreptic* works (137–8). More specifically we may compare his surviving epideictic speeches delivered by characters of mythology—*Ajax* (fr. 53) and *Odysseus* (fr. 54)—to Gorgias' *Defense of Helen* and *Palamedes* (Waterfield 2000, 228–31; Dillon and Gergel 2003, 76–84, 84–93).

31 On Gorgias' philosophy, see Guthrie 1971, 273–4; Dillon and Gergel 2003, 66–76. His moral and political philosophy was based on the principle that any action is justified by the necessity of its circumstances (fr. 6.18 DK: τὸ δέον ἐν τῷ δέοντι) and its present timing (fr. 6.11a DK: ὁ παρὼν καιρὸς). His nihilism is set forth in the semi-serious *On Not-Being*: nothing exists, hence we cannot know it—therefore, we cannot teach it (fr. 3 DK).

32 The case for interpreting Isocrates' *Against the Sophists* 1–2 as an attack on Antisthenes' theory of moral education and discourse has been renewed by Murphy (2013), 330–1; Brancacci 2015, 46–8.

33 Brisson 1998, 87–115. Although Plato sometimes made Socrates "a master" of formal speech (Woodruff 2011, 106–7), this was usually reserved for his rivals to be dissected by him in dialectical cross-examination.

34 This is particularly true of his shorter *aporetic* dialogues, but also of the more complex: *Prt.* 335b; *Grg.* 449c.

35 E.g., the methods of *anamnesis* ("recollection") and *hypothesis* in *Meno* 81b–85e, 87a–b; *Phd.* 100, or the method of *diairesis* in the *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Philebus*.

give little evidence for Plato's interpretation of Socrates' methods of dialectic.³⁶ We see this not only from the tenets of his philosophy, but also from the argumentation used by the characters of his dialogues:

1. The term *brachulogos* was used by Antisthenes to delineate the required brevity and simplicity of moral instruction rather than brief dialectical responses: virtue is imparted by means of a persuasive but brief explanation (*brachulogos*) in contrast to the limitless (*aperantos/aperantologos*) devices for justifying evil (fr. 104A).³⁷
2. His examination (*episkepsis*) of the names of concepts (fr. 160) is concluded by an understanding of the proper account (*oikeios logos*) for each *definiendum* (fr. 152A). By contrast, Plato's interpretation of Socrates' dialectical examination (*dialegomenou ... exetazontos*) is as a lifelong occupation (Ap. 38a)³⁸ and the *definiendum* may never be completely grasped.³⁹
3. Even the characters in several of Antisthenes' mythological and historicizing dialogues explain their thought through set speeches rather than through Plato's Socratic method of short questions and answers.⁴⁰

Although we do not know the extent to which Antisthenes employed this rhetorical mannerism in his Socratic dialogues, Xenophon saw fit to invent a rhetorical presentation speech to be delivered by Antisthenes in praise of Socrates, his master and friend.⁴¹ While scholars dispute the percentage of Xenophon's content derived directly from Antisthenes' works, there is every reason to accept the general tenor of this passage: Antisthenes regarded

36 As we shall see, Plato's use of dialectical refutation was not only methodically different from Antisthenes' understanding of elenctic contradiction (Prince 2015, 153), but also philosophically incompatible with it. Moreover, Antisthenes' work *On Questioning and Answering* (fr. 41.40 = DL 6.17) was probably not an examination of the dialectic portrayed in Plato's dialogues, but similar to his examination of eristics listed alongside it in ancient lists of his works (DL 6.17).

37 If Prince's assignment of fr. 104B to Antisthenes is correct then he claimed that Athenian loquacity (*multa dicere*) was a sign of ethical ignorance standing in contrast to the Laconic utterance of only what suffices to be said (*quid esset satis*).

38 On the comparison of Antisthenes' *episkepsis* with Plato's *exetasis*, see Brancacci 2015, 47–8; Prince 2015, 543–4.

39 While Plato's Socrates entertains doubts concerning the acquisition of full knowledge in this life (Kahn 1998, 162–3) in contrast to true opinion (Robinson 1995, xviii, 129), Antisthenes' philosophy was more this-worldly.

40 Cf. fr. 96, from a set speech delivered by the Titan Prometheus criticizing Heracles' quest for worldly values (Prince 2015, 329–31).

41 Xen. *Symp.* 4.34–44, where Antisthenes classifies his "presentation" as epideictic (43), with all of the rhetorical nuance entailed in this term.

Socrates as a philosopher worthy of formal, if not rhetorical, praise.⁴² Plato would probably agree with the praise but not with its rhetorical manner of presentation.

We may conclude that one important element of Antisthenes' method of argumentation was the use of moral instruction delivered in the form of a character's set-speech and terminating in the proper account of moral concepts. Although he thus differed from Plato's presentation of Socrates' philosophy, they both would have agreed on the need for criticizing the relativistic morality sponsored by the sophists Protagoras and Gorgias.

4 Dialectical Exchange in Antisthenes' Works

Alongside this rhetorical element, there is also evidence for Antisthenes' use of dialectical exchange. In a fragment possibly derived from his *Alcibiades*, there is a brief sketch of a conversation held between Socrates and unnamed "strangers" (fr. 200). Two further sketchy conversations may be derived from this same dialogue. In the first, Socrates argues with unnamed "strangers" concerning Alcibiades' failure as his "pupil"; immediately following it, Antisthenes describes his involvement in a dialectical exchange with unnamed critics concerning a failed follower of his own (fr. 175).⁴³ We also have Xenophon's accounts:

1. A discussion held between Socrates and Antisthenes in the form of a short protreptic dialogue of philosophical encouragement (*Mem.* 2.5.1);⁴⁴
2. a brief exchange concerning the role of education in Socrates' household (*Symp.* 2.9–14);
3. a more detailed exchange between Socrates and Antisthenes concerning the latter's role as his "follower," where he also summarizes his own views on morality (*Symp.* 3.8, 4.1–5).

Xenophon's first two accounts of Antisthenes' meetings with Socrates are similar in style to the sketchy conversations from Antisthenes' works discussed above in that they all lack detailed characterization concerning the participants and circumstances of their meeting. Antisthenes' sketches would have stood in complete contrast to the complex dramatic detail of Plato's

⁴² Both points are expanded upon by Suvák 2014, 72–8.

⁴³ Text and discussion in Luz 2015, 197–202.

⁴⁴ Xenophon does not state that he was actually present himself, but that he heard (*ékousa*) about a conversation (*logon*) between Socrates and Antisthenes. Perhaps its source was in Antisthenes' series of discourses and dialogues known as the *Protrepticus* where Socrates was cited (fr. 64A).

masterpieces.⁴⁵ Although the dialogue structure of both writers originates in drama, Antisthenes' simple sketches are closer to the very nascence of the Socratic dialogue in dramatic mime.⁴⁶ Moreover, while the style of Plato's earlier dialogues often resembles the short stichomythic exchanges between characters of Greek tragedy and comedy, that used in Antisthenes' *Heracles* is more akin to the extended rhetorical address of a character to the chorus. We may at least conclude that some of Antisthenes' dialogues comprised brief, undetailed, dialectical exchanges set between longer rhetorical speeches or clarifications. Unlike Plato's, it does remind us of Xenophon, whose *Memorabilia* is basically a collection of short, uncharacterized sketches of Socratic conversations, composed in a simple dialectic style.⁴⁷ Given Antisthenes' chronological priority to Plato and Xenophon, it is fair to presume that his dialogical compositions would have antedated some of their works as well.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, even those written in response to Plato would seem to have been unaffected by the latter's detailed dramatic style.

We should now briefly examine the method of argumentation employed in Antisthenes' dialectic exchanges as well as their epistemological implications. In Plato's shorter aporetic dialogues, an important stage of the argument is devoted to Socrates' "refutation" (*elenchus*) of his opponent in the discussion. Having questioned his interlocutor concerning a particular philosophical issue, such as "what is piety?" or "what is courage?," Socrates then raises a number of short subsidiary questions in order to undermine either his interlocutor's assumptions or even the logical validity of the entire discussion. In either case the *elenchus* could be directed against a self-contradiction resulting from their assumptions or even evolving from Socrates' own reasoning. For Antisthenes, however, the whole notion of *elenchus* was precluded in principle since he denied the possibility of making a valid contradiction on any subject: "it is impossible to contradict."⁴⁹ The justification for adopting

45 On Plato's dialogues as dramatic compositions, where the literary characterization of the speakers is inseparable from their philosophical discussion, see Rutherford 1995, 10–15; Rowe 2009, 11.

46 On the origin of the Socratic dialogue in dramatic mime, see Arist. *Poet.* 1447b10–11. Antisthenes' method of composition is described by Prince 2015, 683 as specifically displaying "a simple, unframed 'mime' structure."

47 Xenophon's *Symposium* is obviously more complex in literary form, perhaps even influencing Plato as much as it may have been influenced by him (Danzig 2005, 331–57).

48 See Kahn 1998, 19–20 n. 37.

49 Fr. 153A = Arist. *Top.* 104b 19–21: οὐκ ἔστιν ἀντιλέγειν καθάπερ ἔφη Ἀντισθένης. When he assumes that virtue is most indisputably (*anamphilogôtatê*) taught (Xen. *Symp.* 3.4; Fr. 78), he is precluding further contradiction. Attempts to dismiss Aristotle's testimony (Meijer 2017, 21–36) are unconvincing.

this principle is given in his statement that you must halt an opponent who raises a contradiction (*antilegonta*) against you not by inventing further contradictory arguments, but rather by teaching (*didaskein*) him, just as one does not cure a madman by counter-madness (*antimainomenos*).⁵⁰ The origin of his theory of non-contradiction is most easily explained as a rebuttal of Protagoras' proposition that argument (*logos*) and counter-argument (*antilogos*) were simultaneously valid.⁵¹ In contrast to Protagoras' conclusions that truth was relative to the observer, only one proper account (*logos*) was true in Antisthenes' opinion (fr. 155), and only that could be enunciated with any meaningful validity. This proper account should simultaneously affirm and teach its *logos* in its own terms of reference, resulting in a form of self-predication: e.g., that the good is good and the shameful, shameful (fr. 195).⁵² Moral virtue is of good deeds (*erga*) in the sense of chosen action,⁵³ but the simplicity of its explanation needs neither much argumentation (*pleistoi logoi*) nor studied lessons (fr. 134 d). If adhered to strictly, the principles of self-predication and the impossibility of contradiction would preclude not only Gorgias' attempt to justify any *logos* and action on the basis of its correct time and necessary circumstances, but would also preclude the sophist Prodicus' study of the multiple meanings of terms.⁵⁴ Moreover, Antisthenes' principles would also disallow Plato's presentation of Socrates' definition of the moral virtues in terms other than themselves.⁵⁵ Although Aristotle judges

50 Fr. 174. Antisthenes' argument is in the form of a Socratic *epagôgê* whereby contradiction is analogically compared to counter-madness. Implicitly, the *mania* of contradiction can be contrasted with the role of reason (*nous*) in Antisthenes' philosophy (fr. 105).

51 Protagoras claim for the equal validity of every argument and counter-argument was proposed not only in relation to ethical and theological beliefs, but also regarding sensation and non-sensation (e.g., honey as both sweet and sour, or the appearance and non-appearance of the moon). Cf. Gronewald 1968, 1–2; Dillon and Gergel 2003, 42 (fr. 29), 352 n. 136–7.

52 While our sources connect this aphorism with Antisthenes' answer to those who justified incest as argued in Euripides' *Aeolus* (Prince 2015, 669–70), it reflects not only his stand on absolute morality but also his logical assumptions (Luz 2000, 88–95; 2014, 185). It serves as an indirect reply to the intricate justification for adultery and deception set forth, for example, in Gorgias' epideictic speeches on behalf of Helen and Palamedes.

53 Prince 2014, 198. In the moral sphere, Antisthenes criticizes the incest of Cimon and his sister, Elpinice, and the latter's relationship with Pericles (fr. 143A) as well as Alcibiades' incestuous relationships (fr. 141A).

54 On the comparison with Prodicus: Prince 2015, 150–1. It is possible that Antisthenes' five books of discourses *On Education* or *On Names* discussed these points as well (fr. 41A) and were included in his *On the Use of Names* or *Eristic Discourse* (DL 6.17).

55 E.g., virtue as knowledge, or a unity reflecting it (Gulley 1968, 83–91, 151–164). Aristotle's criticism in *Eth. Nic.* 1144b28–30 was probably based on Plato's portrayal of Socrates.

these principles on the grounds of his own metaphysical presuppositions, he inadvertently illuminates the background of Antisthenes' original discussion. He claims that the Antisthenians denied synthetic (*sunthetos*) definition, thus locking themselves in a logical impasse (*aporia* ... *eporoun*): they could teach only a thing's quality, but not what it was.⁵⁶ At least two points mentioned by Aristotle also remind us of Plato's account of Socrates' search for the meaning (*logos*) of virtue and his teacher's aporetic failure to achieve this. The first is Aristotle's assumption that the Antisthenians searched for the meaning (*logos*) of what something is; and the second was their logical impasse (*aporia*) resulting from a failure to reach a conclusion. It is thus likely that Antisthenes also portrayed Socrates involved in an aporetic search for the definition of the virtues. However, unlike Plato, he seems to have claimed that there were *logoi* whose true meaning could actually be taught (*didaktoi*), although further search beyond their basic meaning would lead to confusion (*aporia*).⁵⁷

The dialectic of argumentation employed in Antisthenes' sketches would thus have excluded not only the cross-examination underlying Plato's portrayal of Socratic *brachulogos*, but also the analysis of contradictory arguments. In Antisthenes' view, the moral virtues should be imparted by brief instruction with an intuitive grasp by the student (e.g., fr. 96). This could have been exemplified by Socrates' character and actions or through his moral principles. However, judging from the brief sketch of fr. 200, Socrates' argument was not *presented* as a deductive interrogation typifying much of the argumentation in Plato's Socratic dialogues, but rather as a consecutive battery of short points for consideration.⁵⁸ This is not to deny the deductive element in their common conclusion concerning the value of virtue, but each of the battery of arguments could stand on its own in contrast to the multitude of deductive steps in a Platonic argument.

56 Fr. 150A = *Metaph.* 1043b4–5: they cannot define silver as it is in essence (b4)—that is, give both a material and formal account (b5–6)—for then such a *logos* would no longer be simple but rather synthetically long—so they can describe only what it is like, e.g., “like tin” (b4). However, as in other cases, Aristotle here raises a criticism on the presupposition of his own theory of formal and material causation. Despite this, one may reply to Aristotle that the Antisthenians did describe essence but in terms of self-identity (the shameful is shameful), and thus not in terms of additional qualities.

57 In Antisthenes' eyes, Socrates was an actual teacher (Xen. *Symp.* 4.59, 61); Plato, by contrast, denied that Socrates ever taught anything, lacking knowledge of his own (*Ap.* 19d–e).

58 Socrates' friends think him worthy of receiving a citation for valor in battle and though he denies receiving one, they further press that this was because he relinquished it in favor of Alcibiades (fr. 200).

In other ways, Antisthenes' dialectical style again appears to have served as a precedent for Xenophon rather than for Plato. His *Heracles* compositions have considerable interweaving of separate episodes.⁵⁹ He records Heracles' moral education at the school of Chiron (fr. 92A–E) as well as a chronologically separate encounter with the philosophical Titan Prometheus (fr. 96). Elsewhere, he describes not only events from Alcibiades' youth, but also a separate conversation concerning his army duty (fr. 200) as well as the immorality of his middle age, but apparently as part of a conversation concerning Cyrus (fr. 141A). These compositions would thus have not been confined by the dramatic strictures of a single period of conversation. In order to accomplish the same end, Plato has usually to include in the discussion a speaker's recollection of an earlier episode (e.g., *Sph.* 216a) or introductory remarks by a narrator (*Phd.* 57a–59c).

It has long been noted that Antisthenes would sometimes interrupt the flow of his dialogues to clarify the point discussed.⁶⁰ These interruptions are inserted between the characters' set-speeches⁶¹ and possibly like Xenophon as part of the composition's introduction.⁶² In either case, Antisthenes did this to state his position clearly on the matter under discussion. While other Socratic writers expressed a variety of opinions through the characters of the dialogues, Antisthenes chose to do this in his own voice as if he were a first-hand observer (*autoptês*) of, though not a participant in, the mythical or historical events described. In this respect, he obviously did not serve as a model for Plato, who neither participates in his own dialogues nor volunteers a personal opinion in any of them; but Antisthenes does serve as a precedent for Xenophon, who often introduces his Socratic conversations *in persona*.⁶³ Nonetheless, although Xenophon may interject remarks between sections of his works, he does not actually interrupt a conversation's flow in order to vouch his opinion on points

59 Scholars disagree concerning the unity of the three *Heracles* compositions ascribed to him. The fourth volume of his works includes *Heracles the Greater or On Strength* (DL 6.16); the tenth lists *Heracles or Midas* followed by *Heracles or On Prudence or Strength* (6.18). The last could be an epitome of the first, but all could be separate titles for different episodes in the same book.

60 Prince 2015, 329; an alternative view is in Murphy 2013, 335.

61 He refers to himself in the third person at the end of the Prometheus speech in the *Heracles*: "... as said Antisthenes" where the Syriac particle *lam* indicates an extended citation (fr. 96)—as also his description of Achilles' education under Chiron: "as Antisthenes said" (fr. 92A). In fr. 198, Antisthenes is described as αὐτὸς αὐτόπτης γεγωνῶς, of Alcibiades' character, which could reflect a remark made by Antisthenes in narrating the discussion much as Xenophon once did (*Symp.* 1.1).

62 Fr. 95: "he [Antisthenes] himself gazed at a tablet of painting of Achilles and said ...".

63 E.g., *Mem.* 1.1.1, 20; 1.2.20–1, 62; 2.1.1, 10.1, etc.; *Oec.* 1.1; *Symp.* 1.1; *Ap.* 1, 34.

under discussion as Antisthenes did. In this sense, the latter apparently turned to the reader using his authorial position in order to reinforce the point in hand.⁶⁴ This style of composition has serious epistemological implications. Whether written as an interruption to the narrative or as an introduction to it, the author clarifies his philosophical meaning to the reader in no uncertain terms. In contrast to this stands the dramatic and philosophical impasse that Plato leaves the readers in his aporetic and sometimes non-aporetic dialogues. In both, they are often left with no clear solution from a dramatic and even philosophical point of view.⁶⁵ Plato is thus often interpreted as intending to force his readers to deduce the meaning on their own in lieu of a solution spelled out for them by him or even by Socrates. He discusses this very point in his examination of the double meaning of teaching and learning in his aporetic dialogue *Meno* (81c–d, 82a–b), where the sophists' inductive method of teaching is sharply contrasted with Socrates' method of deductive recollection (*anamnêsis*). Whereas the question whether virtue can be finally taught remains unresolved even in the *Meno* (99e–100c), we do know that Antisthenes explicitly stated that virtue was indeed teachable (*didaktê*) in one of his *Heracles* series of dialogues (fr. 99). He even interrupted one of them in order to praise the hero for joining the Centaur Chiron for the sake of instruction in virtue (fr. 92A–B). We see something similar at the close of the Prometheus episode of the *Heracles*, where the author does this to express his personal view of Heracles' quest (fr. 96). In all of these instances, Antisthenes suggests a solution to the action in the dialogue. He expects them not to deduce it by themselves but to grasp virtue intuitively after the briefest instruction (*brachulogos*): that the good is morally fine and the bad morally shameful. He not only insists that virtue is teachable (fr. 99), but that its true *logos* is to be attained. He thus could not have shared Plato's doubts concerning the attainment of moral knowledge, or lack of it as did Socrates in the Platonic dialogues.⁶⁶

A further way in which Antisthenes directs the reader to a possible solution is by the use of parallel analogies. Aristotle ascribed its use to the historical Socrates under the term "inductive argumentation" although his knowledge of Socrates mostly relies on the Platonic dialogues.⁶⁷ At any rate, the Platonic

64 See Prince 2015, 678–9; Kahn 1998, 33.

65 In fact, Plato's portrayal of an *aporetic* Socrates has often been accepted as indicating the character of the historical Socrates as well (Vlastos 1997, ch. 2).

66 On Socrates as a type of skeptic or agnostic, see Gulley 1968, 62–74.

67 *Metaph.* M.4.1078b28–31. The term "inductive argument" (*epaktikos logos*) refers not to induction but to "arguments from analogy" (Ross 1924, 422) where similar cases are applicable (*epaktikos*) to prove a universal (xliii). On the unreliability of Aristotle's

Socrates frequently compares the quest for a general definition of virtue to the solution of a number of extraneous analogies as if the argument could be transferred from those examples to that of the virtues.⁶⁸ Whether or not this method belonged to the historical Socrates as well, Antisthenes' Socrates seems to have used philosophical analogy in a different way: in order to reinforce moral assertions rather than to prove a universal based on particular instances. Thus, Antisthenes asserts that virtue once acquired is a protective wall that cannot fall, or that it is a shield that cannot be lost.⁶⁹ The analogy of virtue as an actual weapon (*xiphos*) for the defense of the virtuous seems to be an extension of this analogy.⁷⁰ Although they are preserved as similes and metaphors descriptive of the function of virtue, we should not forget that they are meant to serve as analogies for its moral instruction.⁷¹ Thus, although Plato and Antisthenes both portray Socrates' search for the meaning of virtue, they differ regarding its acquisition: for Plato it is to be attained through dialectic deduction in the form of recollection; for Antisthenes it is to be attained through instruction by means of analogy.⁷²

Socratic irony is also an important feature of the Platonic dialogue. Although there are places where Socrates is ironic in the modern sense of the word, Plato also uses *eirōneia*—or the claim not to know when one does—as an important prop for the epistemological scenery of his dialogues.⁷³ While Antisthenes is

evidence for the historical Socrates, see Kahn 1997, 74. On the historicity of the "Socratic method," see Benson 2011, 179–98; on Socrates' use of induction in Plato and Xenophon in this sense, see Gulley 1968, 13–22.

68 E.g., the analogy of defining bees, shape, and color in a universal sense to defining the single essence of virtue (*Meno* 72b, 73e–74b, c); the analogy of standards for determining number, size, or weight to determining a standard for piety (*Euthphr.* 7b–d).

69 On the wall analogy: fr. 134u–v, 106–8; on the shield analogy: fr. 134n.

70 It is found in the fragments of a fourth-century BCE Socratic dialogue accompanied by other analogies of Antisthenes (Luz 2014, 161–91). The "Socratic figure" in it seeks a cure for the effect of the beauty of the second speaker, but finds a moral *xiphos* to defend his virtue when he sees the bad behavior of the latter.

71 Cf. Arist. *Rh.* 1407a10–15 (fr. 51A) on similes, metaphors (*eikones... metaphorai*) in Antisthenes; Xen. *Symp.* 6.8–9 (fr. 51B); Prince 2015, 182–4.

72 Tigner 1970, 1–4; Dancy 2004, 241 on the interpretation of *anamnesis* as a form of deduction.

73 Socrates is repeatedly made to claim that he knows only that he does not know whereas others do not know even that. However, the dramatic situation often implies that he is pretending not to know (in general, see Lane 2011, 237–46). Whether or not the historical Socrates spoke this way (Vlastos 1997, ch. 1; Kahn 1998, 90–1), Plato had him do so as both a prelude and a conclusion to the epistemological analysis set forth in the main body of his dialogues.

often depicted displaying a caustic humor (e.g., fr. 123A–124, 171), he does not generally show the ironic dissimulation characterizing the Platonic Socrates.

Finally, we should recall how the philosophical scenery of Antisthenes' compositions often includes moral discussions between characters of remote history (as between King Cyrus and his courtiers) or between mythical figures (as Heracles/Prometheus and Achilles/Chiron).⁷⁴ While it is true that Plato was not averse to including accounts placed in the mouths of mythological characters like the Titan Prometheus, or narrated accounts concerning semi-historical characters like Gyges, these figures are not actual *personae* of his dialogues.⁷⁵ Antisthenes' mythical scenes were, by contrast, not only set in dialogue form, but were characterized by the use of direct speech, so that a character like Prometheus could upbraid the hero, Heracles, as vividly as possible. This style of composition thus freed Antisthenes from the chronological and dramatic strictures surrounding the Platonic dialogue. An epic background could concentrate attention on the basic point of the argument.

4 Antisthenes' Socratic Dialogues

Keeping in mind what we found concerning Antisthenes' method of composition, we may now examine the evidence for what the ancients regarded as his "Socratic dialogues." Since this term was used in reference to his *Small Cyrus*, *Lesser Heracles*, and *Alcibiades* (43A),⁷⁶ it seems that the mythical/historical dialogues were once considered "Socratic" no less than the *Alcibiades*. Given their episodic structure, it is unlikely that Socrates appeared as the principal speaker throughout these dialogues as he did in those of Plato. Thus imaginary sketches of the lives of Cyrus or Heracles could have been intertwined with episodes taken from the life of Socrates. Antisthenes' composition *Heracles or on Prudence or Strength* (DL 6.18) would be an especially suitable dialogue for discussing his central idea: "for virtue we need nothing additional (*prosdeomenon*) but a Socratic strength (*ischus*)" (fr. 134 c–d; DL 6.11).

74 On these dialogues, see Prince 2015, 144–5.

75 Cf. Prometheus in Pl. *Prt.* 320d–322a and Gyges in *Resp.* 2.359d. Comparable is Xenophon's account of Prodicus' myth of the Choice of Heracles in *Mem.* 2.1.21–34.

76 The exact text is problematic, DL 2.61 (Goulet-Cazé 1999, 268 n. 7, 363 n. 7), but testifies to Antisthenes' authorship of Socratic pieces prior to Pasiphon's criticism (Prince 2015, 165–7). The title *Small Cyrus* could refer either to an *epitome* of the larger volume, or to Cyrus the Younger.

In such a context, the concept of Socrates' strength could refer both to the maintenance of virtue once acquired (*sôphrosunê/enkrateia*) and to its Heracleian acquisition in the face of temptation or difficulties (*karteria/to karterikon*).⁷⁷ From surviving fragments, we see that both aspects are central to this particular mythological theme:

1. In one episode of this dialogue, the hero is criticized by the Titan Prometheus as long as he continues his search for things of worldly value (fr. 96);
2. In another, he is praised for seeking out the Centaur Chiron and for submitting to his love (*erôs*) for the sake of education (fr. 92A–E);
3. Elsewhere, Heracles himself hands out moral advice to his fellow-pupils at Chiron's school: that they should take care when conversing with lovers (fr. 94A).

The very assumption that a Socratic strength is the sole requirement (*ouden prosdeomenon*) for leading and/or acquiring the virtuous life presupposes that Socrates himself exemplified it (fr. 134c–d). With similar presuppositions concerning the requirements for a virtuous life, in his *Heracles* and *Cyrus* dialogues Antisthenes is said to have intended to portray the toil (*ponos*) of Heracles and Cyrus as a moral good (*agathon*). In those two dialogues, Antisthenes reportedly made those heroes moral examples so as to prove a universal truth, “drawing on Heracles from the Greeks” and the Persian Cyrus from the barbarians (fr. 85). If Antisthenes similarly portrayed Socrates' moral strength as a needed “role-model” to be admired, he was not going further than other Socratic writers:

1. Xenophon imaginatively reconstructs not only Antisthenes' admiration of Socrates in *Symp.* 4.43–44, but also expressed his own personal feelings for his friend, intimating that Socrates was a moral example to us all (*Mem.* 1.2.62).
2. In Plato, too, Socrates is generally understood as a moral exemplar,⁷⁸ even if scholars disagree whether Plato's personal opinion should be identified with any specific view expressed by the characters in his dialogues.⁷⁹

It would be intriguing to know whether Antisthenes extended the allegory of Heracles' toil (*ponos*) to cover Socrates' life-long quest for truth noted by Plato (*Ap.* 38a5). Yet in whatever composition Antisthenes made his assertion

77 E.g., Xen. *Mem.* 2.1.1 (ἐγκράτειαν πρὸς ἐπιθυμίαν), 1.5.1–2 (ἐγκράτεια as self-control in general). Fr. 12A, 138B are correct in stating that Antisthenes derived τὸ καρτερικόν/*patientia* from Socrates but probably not the Cynic/Stoic τὸ ἀπαθές/*duritia*.

78 E.g., *Phd.* 118a; *Ep.* 7.324e–325a, even if spurious, may reflect Plato's personal view of Socrates.

79 E.g., Press 2000, 15–82.

concerning Socratic strength, his expression recalls not only Socrates' strength of spirit and prudence indicated by the name of the *Heracles* dialogue, but also a kind of Heracleian physical strength. This is intimated in a sketch of a conversation concerning Socrates' participation in the retreat from the Battle of Delion attributed directly to Antisthenes (fr. 200).⁸⁰ There it is supposed that Socrates showed strength of valor on a physical level in addition to that of the spirit.⁸¹ Plato develops an identical theme though in a different military campaign, adding how Socrates surpassed other soldiers both in self-control and in robustness in facing severe weather conditions (*Symp.* 220a–d). Similarly, he attributes to Socrates the ability to remain physically immune from drink no matter how much he imbibes (176c, 214a) and not to drop off like others at a party (223c) but to remain awake and continue with his regular daily routine on the morning thereafter (223d). Antisthenes' theory of education defines this more succinctly: "those who intend to become (morally) good need to train their body with gymnastic (exercises) and their soul with *arguments* (*logois*)" (fr. 163A).⁸²

In the same tenor, the sketch of Socrates at the Battle of Delion presupposes his inner and outer strength equally: Socrates was robust not only in body in the face of the enemy, but also in humility in relinquishing the prize for citation of valor to his friend Alcibiades.⁸³ It would then appear that episodes depicting Socratic strength of spirit and body were used by Antisthenes, throughout different dialogic compositions, to exemplify his notion of virtue and virtuous action.

That other Socratic writers also portrayed their master as a role model raises the question how each explained Socrates' function as a counselor of virtue. This question had been left unresolved from Socrates' trial where he had been

80 Specifically, the Athenian defeat in the Boeotian War in 424 BCE and Socrates' courageous part in the retreat (Nails 2002, 264–5). Antisthenes' remark may originate in *Alcibiades* fr. 43A or the second *Cyrus* dialogue fr. 141A (see also Prince 2015, 683–4). Antisthenes may possibly have been enlisted for the same fray himself, given that he had fought at the Battle of Tanagra only shortly before (426 BCE; fr. 3a = DL 6.1). If so, he would have been an actual eyewitness for the valor that he ascribes to Socrates.

81 Prince 2015, 683–684; Dorion 2014, 286–288.

82 The word <*logois*> is missing from the text, but something like this should be supplied (Prince 2015, 547–8). The notion of *double training* of body and soul associated with Diogenes the Cynic could have been derived from Antisthenes' notion of Socrates' inner and outer strength.

83 Although Antisthenes makes Socrates deny that he received a citation for valor at the Battle of Delion since it was awarded to Alcibiades, Socrates' anonymous friends there replied that rumor had it that Socrates was the one "who gave it to him [Alcibiades]" (fr. 200). Setting aside the question of historicity, the testimony shows that Antisthenes believes Socrates relinquished, from modesty, a prize that others considered was his due.

accused of claiming to teach virtue while corrupting his students in doing so.⁸⁴ Sometime after Socrates' execution (399 BCE), the sophist-orator Polycrates supposedly expanded on the theme of Socrates' corruption of the youth even further.⁸⁵ In this respect, Antisthenes' portrayal of Socrates was different from that of other Socratic writers.⁸⁶ Since he believed that virtue could actually be taught (*didaktê*), even in its briefest form (fr. 99), he is unlikely to have denied that his Socrates taught others. In fact, even Xenophon imagines Antisthenes involved in a discussion with Socrates concerning virtue as a subject both taught and learned. He also imagines Antisthenes explaining how he acquired (viz. learned) this philosophy from Socrates himself (*Symp.* 4.43; fr. 82).⁸⁷ Thus, while Plato devoted much space to portraying Socrates' epistemological ignorance (*amathia*) and denial of any ability to give formal teaching, Antisthenes and even Xenophon were less preoccupied with these issues, rather than with the question: How did Socrates fail to impart it in certain cases? This question is connected primarily with the apologetics of Socratic literature subtly running through the dialogues of Plato and more overtly in Xenophon. Although we have so little evidence for Antisthenes, it is interesting to note that the fragment concerning the Battle of Delion presupposes Socrates' close relations with Alcibiades (fr. 200).⁸⁸ Antisthenes' account then seems to have taken into consideration this criticism of his mentor's personal relationship with his notoriously failed "pupil." Antisthenes' theory of education demanded that his own pupils keep their "wit" (*nous*) about them if they wished to study morality.⁸⁹

84 Socrates defends himself against the slander both that he corrupted (*diaphtheirai*) the youth (Pl. *Ap.* 24b–c) in his education (*paideia*) of them (Xen. *Ap.* 18–20) and that he was a sophistic educator (Pl. *Ap.* 19e) who could teach that art (20b–c).

85 Probably between 393–380 BCE (Nails 2002, 252–3). Some doubt that the Socratics saw Polycrates' work as needing a response (Kahn 1994, 105–6), but many scholars see him as a specific target in their writings, e.g., Nails 2002, 304 on Xen. *Mem.* 1.1–2. See Murphy (in this volume) for details.

86 Plato flatly denied that Socrates ever taught virtue, claiming that he had no knowledge of his own (*Ap.* 23a–d). Other writers, such as Aeschines, portrayed Socrates as breaking down Alcibiades' conceit while displaying knowledge of how to upbraid him (Kahn 1994, 93–4; 1998, 19–23; Mársico 2018, 202–3). Xenophon maintains that Socrates was a counselor, but refers to his education of the soul (e.g., τὴν τε ψυχὴν ἐπαίδευσε καὶ τὸ σῶμα: *Mem.* 1.3.5).

87 The view that virtue is *didakton* and *mathêton* (2.6; fr. 103A) is ascribed to him and another speaker (Prince 2015, 338–9). He tells Callias that it is indisputable (*anamphilogôtatê*) that virtue is taught (Xen. *Symp.* 3.4–5; fr. 78).

88 Cf. εὐφῆμει, ὦ ξένε· as a reply to critics (fr. 200; Prince 2015, 338–9; and the Socratic introduction to fr. 175).

89 Cf. Luz 2015, 201, 208 on fr. 171 (DL 6.3): to study under Antisthenes would require "a book and wit, a pen and wit, and a notebook and wit (βιβλαρίου καινοῦ καὶ γραφείου καινοῦ καὶ πιννακιδίου καινοῦ)" with the famous play on the words καινοῦ "new" and καὶ νοῦ "and wit."

On allegedly disbanding them when he became a disciple of Socrates, he bade his former pupils go to his new master, but take their wit with them (fr. 12B). Its loss was considered equivalent to moral suicide.⁹⁰ In these terms, a pupil's failure to learn morality could be described as a sort of *anoia* ("lack of *nous*," "folly") regarding the meaning of virtue, relegating the failed pupil to a place beyond the responsibility of his teacher.⁹¹

Antisthenes' explanation for Socrates' failure to instill virtue in Alcibiades is set forth in a fragmentary Greco-Roman dialogue examining failure and success in the arts and sciences.⁹² Its anonymous author quotes two sketchy conversations: one featuring Socrates (ll. 19–25), and another immediately following it, featuring Antisthenes himself (ll. 25–36). Although only the second is normally cited in our fragments (fr. 175), it is clear that both sketches are part of a single argument forming a contextual and logical unit.⁹³ In each case, the philosopher is addressed by anonymous critics concerning a pupil's corruption at a *deipnic* (viz. sympotic) event, from which they themselves had been absent.⁹⁴ In the first case, Socrates is asked how he had not succeeded in making Alcibiades a better person although the latter had spent so long with him as his pupil. His answer is that what "I teach (*didaxô*) him by day," "others unravel (*analuousin*) by night." The tenses indicate a recurrent process whereby Socrates' web of argument is repeatedly unraveled at night, much like Penelope's web in the *Odyssey*. In this case, his daily argumentation is untaught by suitors for Alcibiades' attention who deconstruct his moral theory nocturnally.⁹⁵ The most likely ambience for such an event in fifth-century Athens would be some nocturnal sympotic venue, where Alcibiades forgot or disregarded Socrates' teaching in the philosopher's absence. This situation is clarified in the adjoining anecdote, concerning a conversation held

90 Fr. 105: Give him "either *nous* or the noose (*brochos*)"; by contrast Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.16: Critias and Alcibiades would rather die than live like Socrates all their lives.

91 Xenophon accepts that some philosophers claim that one cannot truly unlearn virtue, but believes that there are those who are mentally incapable of grasping it just as there are those who are physically incapable of achieving certain learnable actions (*Mem.* 1.2.19).

92 Partially preserved in *Pap. Flor.* 113 ll. 19–36, edited and discussed in Luz 2014, 14–15; 2015, 192–210.

93 The content, style, and philosophical character of both conversations are similar and originally formed a single argument in the papyrus dialogue (Luz 2015, 192–210). The first sketch, Socrates' conversation concerning Alcibiades, has been treated as a general Socratic anecdote in spite of its Antisthenean presuppositions and contextual link with the second fragment (fr. 175).

94 Luz 2014, 14–17.

95 The Penelope's web analogy was perhaps philosophically interpreted in Antisthenes' discourses *On Helen and Penelope* and *On Odysseus and Penelope*. Cf. fr. 188B; also Prince 2015, 158–9.

between Antisthenes and unnamed critics about a pupil of his own (fr. 175). The latter had attended a feast (*deipnon*) fêted by Antisthenes' rivals in love (*anterastai*), who succeeded in seducing the lad with an exorbitant meal of which Antisthenes entirely disapproved. However, given the *deipnic*/sympotic atmosphere and the emphasis on love alluded to in the fragment,⁹⁶ it is likely that we are speaking principally of the lad's moral downfall and not just his eating habits. As in the previous case of Socrates and Alcibiades, Antisthenes' teaching lost its effect when the lad was absent from him.⁹⁷

This approach clearly differs from what is imagined in the *Symposiums* of Plato and Xenophon. In that of Xenophon, Antisthenes is ironically cast as a fellow-participant alongside Socrates, but personally exemplifies the success of Socrates' educative use of *erôs* (*Symp.* 4.42–4, 8.5–6).⁹⁸ In Plato, by contrast, Socrates is one whose philosophy of *erôs* is depicted not just as an apparent success (*Symp.* 173b–c), but also as a failure in the case of Alcibiades (212c–215a, 216d–218e). However, in the two papyrus anecdotes just discussed, both Socrates and Antisthenes were implicitly critical of these *symposia*, considering them unfit venues for philosophy. In fact, the failure of their respective pupils was ascribed explicitly to their participation in such events.

The notion of the educative role of *erôs* is well established in the Socratic tradition.⁹⁹ In spite of Antisthenes' criticism of *erôs* and even pleasure in general, the interpretation that he believed that it should be sublimated rather than eliminated is most probably correct.¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, the papyrus anecdotes concerning Socrates and Antisthenes emphasize the concept of teaching virtue through philosophical or virtuous love although it could be thwarted by an immoral *erôs* encountered by their pupils at the *symposia* from which they themselves had been absent.¹⁰¹ It is the actual presence of Socrates and Antisthenes—rather than their arguments—that was here supposed to keep their wards in tow prior to achieving strength of prudence.

96 Antisthenes is described as in love (*eran*, l. 27) with the lad—and his rivals are rival suitors (*anterastai*, l. 33), much like Penelope's suitors from two lines earlier. Events like these were usually preceded by a banquet/meal *deipnon* before the “boozy” section, viz. the *symposion* itself.

97 Plutarch refers to this tradition, describing how Alcibiades slipped away from Socrates in order to enjoy himself with others (*Alc.* 6), citing Antisthenes incidentally.

98 There is thus double irony: Antisthenes as a participant at a sympotic event that he had criticized, and Socrates' jocular references to Antisthenes as a panderer of love.

99 Kahn 1998, ch. 9 (Plato); Kahn 1994, 87–106 (Aeschines); Danzig 2005, 331–357 (Xenophon's “sanitization” of Plato).

100 Prince 2015, 375–6.

101 Although Socrates' love for Alcibiades is not mentioned in the papyrus fragment, the latter's companions at his nocturnal trysts analogously serve as Penelope's rival suitors who here “unravel” Alcibiades' web of loyalty to Socrates' love.

A similar situation is described in a papyrus fragment of a lost dialogue from the period in which Antisthenes was active.¹⁰² There a Socratic *erastês* chastises a younger *erômenos* for abandoning his company and committing moral crimes in his absence.¹⁰³ However, in spite of the similarity of its ideas and terminology, there is no direct evidence that this fragment is by Antisthenes himself. It has been suggested that Antisthenes' *Protrepticus*-series of discourses is a possible source for these discussions of the educative value of *erôs* and the failure of certain pupils of Socrates and Antisthenes.¹⁰⁴ Part of this series does seem to have been sympotic in content, including a short vignette of Socrates' criticism of wine-drinking at a symposium (fr. 64A–B).¹⁰⁵ As in the previous fragment concerning Socrates and Alcibiades, the *Protrepticus* did not clearly depict Socrates as taking part at that symposium himself, but was rather critical of it as a venue for acquiring virtue.¹⁰⁶ Such a situation would be totally different from that conjured up by Plato and Xenophon in their respective *Symposia*, in which Socrates participates fully.¹⁰⁷ From these fragments we may conclude that Antisthenes believed in the educative role of *erôs*, but that the close friendship of teacher and pupil was a *sine qua non* for its success. In contrast, Plato's discussion of the educative role of *erôs* in the *Symposium* is exemplified by Socrates' supposed study under Diotima with its failure exemplified in the speech of Alcibiades.¹⁰⁸

Another sketch directly attributed to Antisthenes describes the effect of Socrates' spirit on a foreign beloved (*erômenos*), who reached Athens only

102 *PErl.* 4 = Pack no. 2103, Merkelbach 1958, no. 1099. Although the papyrus is dated to the second or third century CE, it is written in Attic Greek of the fifth or fourth century BCE, albeit in a simple, stark style of its own.

103 The discussion concerns cures for the desire of the beautiful—and, by implication, the meaning of moral beauty itself.

104 DL 6.1–2; Prince 2015, 137–8. The genre of protreptic compositions was dedicated to the encouragement to turn to philosophy and the virtuous life. Antisthenes' work could have been a source for Xenophon's dramatization of a protreptic discussion between Antisthenes and Socrates (*Mem.* 2.5.1) which Xenophon claims to have heard somewhere.

105 Prince 2015, 137–138, 244–5: there Socrates notes that the custom of drinking from the *bombulios* wine-bibbing jug leads to less drunkenness than free access to the common *phialê* at *symposia* (64A). In Pl. *Symp.* 176a, c, Pausanias suggests a limit for the company's drinking even though Socrates was not to be so restricted.

106 Luz 2014, 14. Similar is the *deipnon* in which Antisthenes did not take part (fr. 175) and the events in which Alcibiades participated when Socrates was not present.

107 I have suggested elsewhere that Antisthenes' sympotic discussion was prior the Plato's *Symposium*, which opens with a long and intricate rejection of previous attempts to describe Socrates at such events (172b–173b; Luz 2014, 14–16).

108 Luz 2014, 161–191, on possible links with the Antistheneans if not Antisthenes himself.

after the philosopher's death and was greatly affected by a visit to his tomb.¹⁰⁹ Elsewhere, this dream motive is portrayed more realistically, describing the effect of Socrates' memory on his followers (*erastai*) and directly leading to the punishment meted out on Anytus and Meletus for having instigated Socrates' execution.¹¹⁰ In contrast to Plato's other-worldly account in the *Phaedo* (109a–115b), Antisthenes apparently maintained that to live piously and justly was the way to bequeath an eternal memory and that this was the case of Socrates' *post mortem* memory among his disciples.¹¹¹ This dialogue seems to describe how Socrates' memory was cherished by his followers, much as Plato's *Phaedo* did (57a–59c, 118a), and to suggest that since his spirit reappeared from the tomb, there is perhaps an understanding that it still somehow existed.

Finally, we may briefly examine the imaginary speeches and conversations dramatized in Xenophon. In the first speech (*Symp.* 4.34–45), Antisthenes explains to Socrates and the rest of the company the grounds for his argument that wealth and poverty reside in the soul rather than in the home. This attitude to life awarded him freedom to practice philosophy and released him from unnecessary social and political chores (fr. 82). He then attributes this teaching to Socrates, who taught Antisthenes how to spend his days freely (*scholazôn sundiêmereueîn*) with his mentor. Although there are many Platonic borrowings in this passage in addition to Xenophon's own invention,¹¹² the basic philosophy that Xenophon attributes to Antisthenes could well be authentic. However, it is impossible to know whether Antisthenes attributed this philosophy to Socrates in his original works, or whether this was an attempt of Xenophon's to deflate Antisthenes' originality. It is even difficult to assess which of the analogies that Xenophon uses to prove his argument could be developed from Antisthenes' original compositions, even though they do sound authentic. Later, Socrates returns the compliment that Antisthenes

109 Antisthenes' *Cyrsas or the Beloved* is a likely source (fr. 41A l. 73, 84A; Prince 2015, 161, 303–4), but the surviving testimony (fr. 84B) has conflated the account with supernatural content, relating the appearance of Socrates' apparition to Cyrsas of Chios in a dream at his tomb-side (Prince 2015, 305–6).

110 Fr. 84c = ps.-Soc. *Ep.* 17 (supposedly Aeschines) to a Chian. See Prince 2015, 307–8; Trapp 2003, 68–70, 215. On Antisthenes' special interest in the fate of Anytus and Meletus, see fr. 21 (DL 6.9–10).

111 Fr. 176 (DL 6.5): those who wish to be immortal need to live piously and justly. There is little to show that Antisthenes developed an eschatology, although interesting testimony about his philosophy of nature and theology exist: see Prince 2015, 568–83. In contrast to Antisthenes' drama around Socrates' alleged tomb, Plato has Socrates explicitly deny interest in whether his remains should be cremated or buried, as if that tomb were unknown to the author (*Phd.* 115c; Prince 2015, 308–9).

112 Prince 2015, 285–98.

gave him (*Symp.* 4.56–64) by making Antisthenes heir to his own philosophy of friendship (*philia*) and love (*erôs*): the bonds between individuals of society need the assistance of intermediaries like himself and Antisthenes in order to match or reconcile them (fr. 13A).¹¹³ We do learn from Antisthenes' biography about the importance to him of a philosophical, spiritual love (DL 6.12, 105): only the good person is worthy of love (*axierastos*) and the moral are his friends (fr. 99, 134). If the speech that Xenophon creates for Socrates reflects anything of this, then his joke about Antisthenes as a match-maker would refer to his theory of philosophical love.¹¹⁴ However, we should not forget that in Xenophon's account it is Socrates, rather than Antisthenes, who presents this philosophy. Thus we do not know how much of Socrates' speech represents Xenophon's personal understanding and portrayal of Socrates, and how much it reflects Antisthenes' previous presentation of his mentor's teaching.

5 Conclusion: The Portrayal of Socrates

Much of Antisthenes' portrayal of Socrates remains enigmatic. This is caused not only by the dearth of authentic quotations but also by the episodic structure of his dialogues. In them Antisthenes delineated only brief sketches of Socrates' conversations, intermittently; thus much of their context eludes us. However, if his portrayals of Chiron and Prometheus were prototypes for his image of Socrates, then his mentor would have been presented as a wise guide seeking to impart virtue to others through the protreptic force of his personality and example. He was thus not responsible for pupils like Alcibiades who, no longer in his company, were corrupted by others.

Judging from the methodology of Antisthenes' argumentation, we would expect him to have shown how his mentor sought the correct definition of ethical values, but avoided the invention of intricate refutations. Socratic *aporia* would be the result of overly detailed discussions of the qualities of virtue at the cost of examining its simple meaning. In this sense, Antisthenes' portrayal of Socrates would have lacked much of the argumentation typifying Socrates' inquiry in the Platonic dialogues.¹¹⁵ Although this leaves us with a no-less-enigmatic picture of the historical Socrates, Antisthenes does help us

113 Prince 2015, 52–3, on the joke of Socrates and Antisthenes as procurers (*proagôgos/mastropos*) attempting to cater to the tastes of their friends.

114 See Prince 2015, 256–7, on fr. 69 as Philodemus' reply to Antisthenes and Socrates that they could not reconcile individuals to society, but only to themselves.

115 Later anecdotes make metaphysical and ontological assumptions the basis for friction between Plato and Antisthenes (fr. 148, 149A–C).

understand the way in which Socrates' philosophy was absorbed by his pupils. It was finally Antisthenes and not Plato or Xenophon who was in the close coterie of loyal companions standing by Socrates' side at his execution. If there is substance to his account of Cyrsas' dream, Antisthenes would apparently have remembered with reverence not only the event, but also the place where his master was buried.

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Xenophon's Socrates and the Socratic Xenophon

David Johnson

Xenophon may just be the most complex figure in the reception of Socrates. We have some idea of who Socrates was before Nietzsche got his hands on him, for example. But unless we blindly accept Plato's early Socrates as the original article, we have no access to a Socrates before Xenophon. For Xenophon was a first-generation Socratic, who often reminds us that he knew Socrates himself. Yet in his Socratic works, the *Memorabilia*, *Apology*, *Symposium*, and *Oeconomicus*, he also refers explicitly to other accounts of Socrates, accounts he supplements and corrects, so his writings about Socrates, far more so than any other first-generation Socratic known to us, are based not only on Xenophon's own memories of Socrates but his reaction to other versions of Socrates in circulation. So Xenophon's Socrates is both a pre-reception Socrates, if we can speak of such a thing, and an early figure in the reception of Socrates.

A second factor complicating Xenophon's role in the reception of Socrates is that it is impossible to know just where, in Xenophon's writings, Socrates ends and Xenophon begins. Socrates makes brief appearances in each of Xenophon's major non-Socratic works, in the *Anabasis* (3.1.4–7), *Hellenica* (1.7.15), and *Cyropaedia* (3.1.14, 38–40). More important than these passages are the themes shared across Xenophon's Socratic and non-Socratic works, above all Xenophon's concern with leadership and character. Xenophon also employs techniques that may have been inspired by Socrates: he often begins in wonder, with a question; he makes use of dialogue; and he is arguably dialectical and ironical in a broader sense.¹ Readers of Xenophon are thus left to wonder both how much of a Socratic Xenophon was, even when writing on other topics, and how much of Xenophon's non-Socratic experiences and interests rubbed off on his Socrates.

We know enough about Xenophon's life to say both that Socrates had an influence on him in his formative years and that Xenophon had a wide range of experiences after leaving Socrates behind, experiences that could well have reshaped his view of Socrates. Born not long after 430 BCE, Xenophon could have spent as many years by Socrates' side as did Plato, his slightly younger contemporary. But Xenophon, ignoring Socrates' advice (*An.* 3.1.4–7), left

¹ Humble 2017.

Athens in 401 to campaign with the Persian prince Cyrus the Younger, and then served with the Spartan king Agesilaus, who became his patron. By 394 Xenophon had, as Socrates had feared, been exiled from Athens. But Agesilaus provided Xenophon with an estate at Scillus, not far from Olympia, where he lived until 371, when Sparta's defeat at Leuctra allowed the neighboring Eleans, rivals of the Spartans, to reclaim Scillus and evict Xenophon. We are less sure of Xenophon's career after that. Diogenes Laertius tells us he moved to and later died at Corinth (2.56), but it is likely that his exile from Athens was revoked and possible that he returned there. Xenophon presumably began writing only after he was settled at Scillus; Scillus was a tiny town, but close to the major shrine at Olympia, which attracted intellectual as well as athletic and religious visitors. We are told that it was at Olympia that the future Socratic Aristippus heard such an inspiring account of Socrates that he sought out Socrates at Athens: the account was given him by none other than the gentleman-farmer Ischomachus known to us mainly from Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*.² Xenophon continued working as a writer until quite late in his long life, as several of his works allude to events of 360 or later (*Agesilaus*, *Hellenica*, *Cyropaedia*); the latest reference in his works appears to be to the end of the Social War in 355 (*De vectigalibus* [*Poroi*] 4.40, 5.12).

Xenophon's Socratic works cannot be dated,³ but they share many of the same concerns as his non-Socratic works, and often make very similar points with very similar language. Xenophon was almost certainly already an exile from Athens, with considerable experience in Asia and a close relationship with a Spartan king, by the time he began to write about Socrates. We therefore cannot isolate Xenophon's Socratic works from the rest of his corpus on grounds of chronology, life experience, or theme. Xenophon did, however, associate with Socrates early in his life rather than later, and we have to introduce his view of Socrates before looking for Socratic elements in Xenophon's non-Socratic works, so it is with the Socratica that we begin.

1 Xenophon among the Socratics

Xenophon's relegation to the second tier of Socratic authors is not solely a matter of bias in favor of Plato's Socrates, though that is surely a factor.⁴

2 The story was probably told by Aeschines (*SSR* IV A 2 = VI A 91 = Plut. *de curios.* 2.516c).

3 *Memorabilia* 3.5.2–4 has traditionally been taken to post-date Leuctra (371), but see Johnson 2017, 484 n. 3.

4 In this section I present a condensed and revised version of an argument in Johnson 2018.

Rather, Xenophon's Socratic works are distanced from Socrates in two major ways. The first is that Xenophon often refers explicitly, and more often alludes unmistakably, to other accounts of Socrates. His Socrates is thus one of many, and Xenophon is reacting to other versions of Socrates as well as reflecting his own experiences. The second is that Xenophon, unlike Plato, himself intrudes into his account of Socrates. The young Xenophon appears once as a character, in the third person, where he naively underestimates the risks attached to kissing young beauties (*Mem.* 1.3.9–13). More important is Xenophon's use of an authorial narrator in all of his Socratic works. While that narrator immediately fades from the scene after introducing the *Symposium* and *Oeconomicus*, a strong narrative voice shapes the *Memorabilia* and *Apology*.

The most striking thing said by Xenophon as narrator is his claim to have been present at many of Socrates' conversations. The narrator claims this at the outset of the *Symposium* and *Oeconomicus*, and throughout the *Memorabilia* (1.4.2, 1.6.14, 2.4.1, 2.5.1, 4.3.2). In fact the narrator essentially claims at *Memorabilia* 1.3.1 to have been present for all of the conversations recounted in the *Memorabilia* after the direct defense of Socrates in its first two chapters. That direct defense is the exception that proves the rule, for the trial of Socrates took place when Xenophon was off with the Ten Thousand in Asia; Xenophon therefore sources his account of the trial to the Socratic Hermogenes (*Ap.* 2; *Mem.* 4.8.4). But, as has long been recognized, Xenophon's claims to autopsy, if taken literally, are not credible. The party depicted in Xenophon's *Symposium* took place in 422 BCE, when he was no more than eight years old and so could hardly have been a guest. In the *Oeconomicus* (4.18), Xenophon supposedly overhears Socrates mentioning the death of Cyrus, something that Xenophon witnessed in 401 but could never have heard Socrates discuss, as Xenophon did not return to mainland Greece, much less to Athens, until years after Socrates' death in 399. The fictionality of the claims to autopsy would have been clear enough to readers in Xenophon's day, which suggests that he was not trying to fool anyone. So too it seems likely that readers of the *Anabasis* knew full well that the third-person character named Xenophon, who comes to play a dominant role in that book, and about whom the first-person narrator appears preternaturally well informed, was none other than the Xenophon who wrote the book and spoke as narrator.

What Xenophon was trying to do with these claims to autopsy, I believe, was to say that he himself was responsible for his work on Socrates, that it was based on his own memories of Socrates, and was not simply derivative of other accounts. That is, Xenophon was claiming that he was not merely an early figure in the reception of Socrates. If this is right, Xenophon rather presciently anticipated and tried to preempt the dismissive attitude among

most scholars during the twentieth century, who did not consider Xenophon a first-order source for Socrates but as, at best, an author who may preserve traces of lost works by more important Socratics like Antisthenes,⁵ or help confirm what is Socratic rather than Platonic in Plato. At least in the analytic strand still dominant in Anglo-American circles, when Xenophon confirms Plato's account of Socrates, this helps show that Plato preserves the original Socrates; when Xenophon's evidence appears to conflict with Plato, Xenophon is dismissed as second-rate; when Xenophon attributes thoughts to Socrates not found in Plato, he is ignored.⁶

But when Xenophon engages with other Socratics, he asserts that he does so as their equal, as a man who also had direct access to Socrates. He does not, however, characterize his account as an alternative that should be selected in place of all other accounts. He tells us as much in each of his three explicit allusions to other accounts of Socrates.⁷

It seems to me worthwhile also to recall how Socrates deliberated, when he had been charged, about his defense and about the end of his life. Others have also written about this, and all of them captured his boasting, which makes it clear that this is how he really spoke. But they have not made it clear that he believed that death was preferable to life for him, and as a result his boasting appears rather foolish.

Ap. 1.1

And if certain people, conjecturing on the basis of what others have written and said about him, believe that he was the best at turning people towards virtue, but not capable of leading them to it, let them consider not only what he said to those who thought they knew everything when, for the sake of correcting them, he refuted them by questioning, but also what he said all day long with those who spent their time with him. And let them then judge whether he was capable of making those with him better.

Mem. 1.4.1

5 Cooper (1999, especially 6–10, 16–18) well refutes earlier attempts to see Xenophon as dependent on Antisthenes.

6 As in Vlastos 1991, 99–106; for a critical account of Vlastos' use of Xenophon, see Beversluis 1993.

7 Most scholars would count references to "the accuser" in *Mem.* 1.2 as references to Polycrates' *Accusation of Socrates*, but see Gray 1998, 60–73; Livingstone 2001, 28–40.

He was in no hurry to see his companions become skilled speakers, capable of getting things done, and resourceful, but thought that that they needed to have moderation first. First off, then, he attempted to make his companions moderate concerning the gods. Others have related conversations he had with people about this; I for my part was present when he had the following conversation with Euthydemus.

Mem. 4.3.1–2

Each of these passages plays a key role in introducing and characterizing Xenophon's account of Socrates. The first introduces the *Apology*. The second helps to characterize the bulk of the *Memorabilia*, all that follows the direct defense of Socrates in 1.1–2. The last comes at the beginning of Xenophon's account of Socrates' education of Euthydemus, the model student featured in most of Book 4.

The rhetorical structure of each of these passages is similar. Xenophon does not reject previous accounts of Socrates: he adds to them. In the *Apology* passage, Xenophon notes that all who wrote about Socrates' trial have portrayed Socrates as being boastful. Xenophon does not dispute this characterization—he in fact notes that this agreement shows that Socrates must really have been boastful. But he will add to readers' understanding by explaining why Socrates boasted. In our second passage, readers of the *Memorabilia* will be aware of Socrates' refutations of know-it-alls; Xenophon does not deny that Socrates refuted such men and in fact shows Socrates in conversation with such types (Antiphon in *Mem.* 1.6, Aristippus in 2.1 and 3.8, Hippias in 4.4). But Xenophon asks readers also to consider another, more explicitly productive sort of conversation, one which features far more prominently in his own work. Finally, at *Memorabilia* 4.3.2 Xenophon notes that others who had been present at such conversations have shown how Socrates made his interlocutors moderate concerning the gods. Xenophon will take up another such case, that of Euthydemus. In this last passage it is less clear how Xenophon's account is to differ from others already in circulation, but one way is in the use he makes of Socrates' religious views: moderation (*sôphrosunê*) concerning the gods is the first stage in Socrates' positive education of Euthydemus, as it serves as a protection against misuse of the skill in speaking developed in later stages (*Mem.* 4.3.1). Xenophon was trying to do something no other Socratic did, to the best of our knowledge: unify a great range of Socratic lessons within a comprehensive account of Socrates. In the case of Euthydemus in Book 4, we have a series of conversations with a single interlocutor (*Mem.* 4.3, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7) that spell out a Socratic curriculum.⁸

⁸ On this curriculum, see Moore 2017.

Thus Xenophon's readers know individual conversations from other authors, but lack anything like the compendium of conversations that make up the *Memorabilia* in general and Book 4 in particular.

A more subtle sort of intertextuality can be found in passages where Xenophon describes his Socrates in terms that seem far more fitting for Plato's version. Hence at *Memorabilia* 1.1.16 Xenophon tells us that rather than talking about nature, Socrates asked questions about key terms in ethics.

He himself was always discussing human things, investigating what is pious, what impious, what noble and what base, what just and what unjust; what moderation is, what madness, courage, and cowardice are; what a city is, what a statesman, what rule of men is, what makes one capable of ruling men; and anything else which, being known, makes one noble and good and which, if one is ignorant, leads one to justly be called slavish.

Mem. 1.1.16

The emphasis on leadership seems Xenophontic enough, though it is not only Xenophontic, as we will discuss below. But pursuit of the other ethical questions sounds remarkably like Plato's Socrates. Xenophon's Socrates does devote himself to "human things" rather than the study of nature (but see *Mem.* 1.4 and 4.3, versions of the argument from design), and he does give considerable attention to definitions (*Mem.* 3.8, 3.9, 4.2, 4.4, 4.6; *Oec.* 1). But it seems odd to say that he was *always* been discussing such things. He more often teaches or gives advice.

Rather similarly, Charicles, one of the Thirty Tyrants, characterizes Xenophon's Socrates in a way more in keeping with Plato's: "You, Socrates, are accustomed to ask most of your questions about things you already understand" (*Mem.* 1.2.36). This is part of the effort by Critias and Charicles to silence Socrates by outlawing teaching of "the art of words." Critias clarifies what they mean by that deliberately vague phrase a bit later.

"You have to keep away from these men: cobblers, builders, and smiths. For I think they have already been talked to death by all your chatter."

"So too," said Socrates, "am I to keep away from what follows upon those questions, justice and piety and other things of that sort?"

Mem. 1.2.37

With his faux-naïve efforts to clarify the meaning of the law, Socrates demonstrates that the law was really an *ad hominem* attack on his brave

criticism of the Thirty. And while Xenophon's Socrates does make analogies to craftsmen (as at *Mem.* 4.2.22, 4.4.5) and does discuss the virtues, the craft analogy and questions about the virtues are more Platonic than Xenophontic.

Later in the *Memorabilia*, the sophist Hippias of Elis makes a similar point.

You're content with laughing at others, questioning and refuting all of them, while being unwilling to supply your account or opinion about anything.

Mem. 4.4.9

This is the same complaint made by Thrasymachus against Plato's Socrates (*Resp.* 1.336b). Xenophon's Socrates, on the other hand, rarely seems to withhold his views; Xenophon instead emphasizes that Socrates did not hide what he thought (*Mem.* 4.4.1), though this may apply most particularly to those who had shown themselves worthy of hearing his views because they were willing to be subject to refutation (*Mem.* 4.2.40). The fact that Xenophon had to defend Socrates' openness does of course show that there was some room for doubt here, and in fact on at least one occasion Xenophon's Socrates appears to duck a central philosophical question. In *Memorabilia* 3.8, Socrates, because he wants to benefit his followers, answers "not like those guarding against having their argument twisted, but like those persuaded to do what they ought to do" (3.8.1). So he refuses to give Aristippus a straightforward answer when asked what the good is, and instead says he "neither knows nor wants to know" (3.8.3) what the good is, or what is fine, unless it is something good or fine for one purpose or another.⁹

In each of these cases, then, someone, whether it be the narrator, one of the Thirty Tyrants, or a sophist, attributes to Xenophon's Socrates a talking point that is more characteristic of Plato's Socrates. The most common response by commentators, even those otherwise fairly sympathetic to Xenophon, is to suggest that Xenophon has mistakenly allowed the real Socrates (i.e., the Platonic Socrates) to peek out.¹⁰ But it seems rather more likely (not to mention more charitable) that Xenophon knew what he was doing, and that he was not presenting a completely autonomous and independent version of Socrates, but was writing about the same Socrates that Plato and the other Socratics were. This alternative is supported by the fact that these Platonic elements, while not characteristic of Xenophon's Socrates, are not entirely foreign to him, either. Xenophon does not deny that definitions, leading questions, and

9 On this passage, see further Johnson 2009.

10 See the remarks on the relevant passages in Dorion 2000 and 2011b and Bevilacqua 2010.

refutation are characteristic of Socrates, but insists that Socrates had more to offer than definitions, leading questions, and refutation, and chooses to focus on Socratic approaches which the other Socratics, above all Plato, had neglected.

So Xenophon's Socrates is not a character we can read in isolation. He is an intertextual Socrates, a Socrates founded on previous portraits of Socrates but with Xenophontic additions and corrections. When Xenophon writes "Socrates," he does not mean "my Socrates" but "our Socrates," the Socrates who is the common model for all who know what sort of man he was and who desire to emulate his virtuous ways (*Mem.* 4.8.11). This Socrates is not a static historical figure, though for Xenophon he is founded in Socrates "as he was" (οἷος ἦν, *Mem.* 4.8.11), the historical Socrates who really was boastful at his trial, as the agreement of all of Xenophon's sources shows (*Ap.* 1). Xenophon's Socrates resides somewhere between history and reception.

Xenophon's more conventional Socratic dialogues, the *Oeconomicus* and *Symposium*, are also part of the debate among Socratic writers. This is evident enough for Xenophon's *Symposium*, given its clear intertextuality with Plato's homonymous work. Xenophon must be alluding to Plato when he has Socrates say that Pausanias, "defending those wallowing in lack of self-control" (ἀπολογούμενος ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀκρασίᾳ συγκαλινδουμένων), thought that a very brave army could be made from lovers (*Symp.* 8.32; cf. 8.34). As a matter of fact, the army of lovers is praised in Plato not by Pausanias but by Phaedrus (*Symp.* 178e–179a; cf. 182b). No matter: Socrates' attack on corporeal consummation in pederastic affairs also refutes Pausanias' defense of pederasty in Plato (*Symp.* 180c–185c; cf. Xen. *Symp.* 8.9 with Pl. *Symp.* 179d–e). By garbling Pausanias with Phaedrus Xenophon perhaps signals us that he has a larger target in mind, the permissive attitude toward sex found in all the speeches in praise of Eros in Plato, even Socrates' own, which not only has the ladder of love begin with bodily love between lover and beloved, but moves on to the Don Juan phase in which the lover considers all beautiful bodies worthy of his attention (*Symp.* 210b). Plato's Socrates does indeed resist the advances of Alcibiades (*Symp.* 215a–222c), but he does not clearly articulate why he resisted. Xenophon's Socrates, in other words, is not just condemning Pausanias but critiquing Plato for failing to explain why love between men should not include physical consummation. Just as Plato correctly portrays Socrates' boasting in the *Apology*, but failed to explain it, so too in his *Symposium* he showed that Socrates was chaste but failed to explain why. Xenophon corrects Plato, but his corrections are premised on the notion that there is something to correct, and that something is the figure of Socrates that they share, the man who was arrogant at his trial and who rejected Alcibiades' erotic overtures.

The *Oeconomicus* is certainly more of an outlier among Socratic works, but it is not a treatise on farming hidden in the garb of a Socratic dialogue. The dialogue begins with a highly abstract argument about the meaning of wealth. Later, farming is made an example for the Socratic principle that learning comes via questioning and recollection (*Oec.* 19.15)—perhaps a droll, terrestrial Xenophonic response to Plato's making recollection a basis for his otherworldly doctrine of the immortality of the soul. The *Oeconomicus* clearly responds to the Aristophanic image of Socrates, which is overtly invoked at 11.3 when Socrates notes that he is said to chatter idly and measure the air (ἀδολεσχεῖν τε δοκῶ καὶ ἀερομετρεῖν, cf. *Nub.* 225, 1485, 1503; Eupolis fr. 386, 388). Given this reputation, Socrates says, he can hardly be expected to critique the life of the noble and good Ischomachus. But Socrates then manages to do precisely this, at least indirectly, by wryly telling the anecdote of a horse that is noble and good despite not being rich (*Oec.* 11.4–5). Aeschines may well be another implicit interlocutor in the dialogue, at least if Socrates' unkept promise to introduce Aspasia (*Oec.* 3.14) is a reference to Aeschines' *Aspasia*. In Aeschines' dialogue, Aspasia gives marital advice to none other than Xenophon and his wife (*SSR* VI A 70 = Cic. *de invent.* 1.31.51–3), advice we are to compare and, I would argue, contrast with that given by Ischomachus, who plays up his wife's potential but does not call for the mutual self-improvement Aeschines' Aspasia recommends for Xenophon and his wife.

I cannot claim, within the boundaries of this essay, to have demonstrated that the *Oeconomicus* is a thoroughly Socratic counterattack against Ischomachus as a representative of certain conventional values, while the *Symposium* is a rather less veiled attack on Callias, and, through him, on Plato.¹¹ What we can safely say, I think, is that Xenophon expected both works to be read as part of an ongoing, contemporary conversation about Socrates. I would argue, in fact, that Xenophon's goal in his Socratic works resembles that of modern scholarship on Socrates to a surprising extent, despite differences in technique. Xenophon is responding to others in an effort to get at the truth about Socrates. This truth certainly is not a search for the *ipsissima verba* of Socrates: Xenophon is happy to recollect Socratic conversations Socrates never had. We modern scholars do not write Socratic dialogues like the *Oeconomicus* or *Symposium*, but our argument about whether Socrates really meant to secure an acquittal, for example, seems already to have been topical in Xenophon's

11 For a view of the *Oeconomicus* that is fairly critical of Ischomachus, see Danzig 2010, 239–63; contrast Dorion 2017, which argues that Ischomachus and Socrates are complementary figures. Good work on the *Symposium* includes Wohl 2004, Danzig 2004 and 2005, and the commentaries by Bowen (1998) and Huss (1999).

day.¹² For Xenophon and his contemporaries, the way to debate Socrates' approach to his trial or Socratic teaching on a topic like sexual morality was not to tease out the implications from their necessarily imperfect memories of what Socratic actually said, but to write new Socratic conversations. These conversations were read as part of the larger conversation about Socrates and were, I suggest, judged as contributions to that wider conversation. The Socratics' very different methodology may give us an external point of view from which to reevaluate our own methods. Perhaps our rival interpretations of texts are not as distinct from the creation of new texts as we tend to believe. Perhaps our attempts to reconstruct Socratic arguments by supplying missing premises, or making much of implicit but unarticulated distinctions, are not so different from what happened when a Socratic like Xenophon provided Socrates with a new argument in response to arguments made, or missing, in other accounts of Socrates. We are all, in other words, trying to figure out what Socrates would say in response to our questions, and we are all doing reception of Socrates.

2 Socrates' Influence on Xenophon

2.1 *Xenophon's Socratic Heroes*

There are many ways to examine Socrates' possible influence on Xenophon. One is to compare Socrates with other characters Xenophon admires. This is largely the tack taken by Deborah Gera in her 2007 chapter on Xenophon's reception of Socrates.¹³ Gera rightly notes fundamental similarities among Xenophon's heroes: Socrates, Agesilaus, Jason of Pherae, Cyrus the Elder, and Xenophon himself. All are noteworthy for their attention to *enkrateia* ("self-mastery"); and justice and piety are central concerns not only for Socrates but also for Agesilaus and Cyrus. Indeed, there are passages praising one or another of these men that could just as well apply to the others, leading Gera to suggest that "great leaders found in Xenophon's non-Socratic writings are in many ways much of a muchness and Socrates seems to be just one more instance of this ideal type" (2007, 34).

Gera herself, however, notes important difference among these Xenophontic heroes, the most important being the manner of their deaths. Gera argues

12 The consensus view has long been that neither Plato's nor Xenophon's Socrates made any such attempt (cf. Waterfield 2009), but Brickhouse and Smith 1989 and Reeve 1989 influentially challenged that understanding of Plato's *Apology*.

13 Other comparative studies of Xenophontic leaders include Gray 2011 and Tamiolaki 2012.

that “Xenophon is not happy” (2007, 38) with Socrates’ decision not to seek acquittal, an argument she rests on the examples of Agesilaus and Cyrus. Xenophon tells us that Agesilaus “alone of men has shown that the vigor of the body may grow old, but the strength of the soul of good men is ageless” (*Ages.* 11.14). So long as his body supported him, Xenophon notes, Agesilaus inspired confidence among his friends and fear in his enemies. Xenophon also has Cyrus the Elder die at peace, after passing on his last lessons to his sons and his friends, including his musings on immortality—despite the fact that our other sources have him die a sudden violent death in battle (*Cyr.* 8.7; cf. *Hdt.* 1.214). Cyrus thus gains the “peaceful, timely, and philosophical death which Socrates should have had” (Gera 2007, 39).

The contrast here is certainly striking, but it is not clear that Xenophon was unhappy with Socrates’ approach toward his trial and thus simply had to do the best he could to excuse it. Plato, after all, gives Socrates a peaceful and philosophical death in his *Phaedo*—so Xenophon, too, had a choice about how to characterize Socrates’ end, just as he had a choice with Cyrus. He chose to have Socrates meet his end by boldly proclaiming his virtues and showing his bravery in a way that won him eternal glory. So Xenophon’s *Apology* is not simply an effort to explain away Socrates’ failure to secure an acquittal as a decision to commit suicide by jury.¹⁴ Cyrus’ deathbed speech, for its part, is devoted above all to convincing his sons to rule Persia responsibly after his death; in this, if in nothing else, Cyrus utterly fails, as Xenophon makes clear immediately after Cyrus’ death (*Cyr.* 8.8.2). Scholars differ widely on the meaning of Persia’s sudden decline, as it has been taken to show both Cyrus’ unique ability as a leader and his ultimate failure as a leader.¹⁵ There is a similar debate about the penultimate chapter of the *Spartan Constitution*, which depicts the decline of contemporary Sparta in a work otherwise aimed, it would seem, at praising the Lycurgan order.¹⁶ Gray (2011, 251–3) has argued that the fates of Alcibiades and Critias are the parallel case for Socrates: just as Persia went into decline with the absence of Cyrus, and Sparta with the absence of Lycurgus, so too Alcibiades and Critias went wrong once they left Socrates. But Xenophon devotes a significant chunk of the *Memorabilia* (1.2.12–48) to defending Socrates’ role with Alcibiades and Critias, while there is no such defense for Lycurgus or Cyrus.

14 For an excellent account of Xenophon’s positive case in the *Apology*, see Danzig 2014.

15 For one account of the *Cyropaedia* critical of Cyrus, see Johnson 2005; for a defense of Cyrus, see Gray 2011.

16 For this debate, see Humble 2004.

Agesilaus could indeed still raise morale and frighten enemies in extreme old age thanks to his strength of soul; but Socrates was instead concerned about old age making it harder for him to learn new things and remember what he had learned (*Mem.* 4.8.8, *Ap.* 6). Socrates' particular concern about intellectual decline reflects the most fundamental distinction between him and Xenophon's other heroes, one perhaps so obvious that Gera did not bother to mention it: Socrates is far wiser than any of Xenophon's other heroes. Hence Xenophon's final eulogy of Socrates, at the end of the *Memorabilia*, starts with his piety, justice, and self-mastery, but is capped by Socrates' wisdom (4.8.11). It is hardly surprising to see Socrates praised for his wisdom, but given the tendency to conflate Xenophon's Socrates with his other heroes, and to emphasize the non-intellectual side of his teaching, it is worth pointing out.

2.2 *Xenophon as a Socratic Author*

Another way to look for what is Socratic in Xenophon is to consider Xenophon as an author. Noreen Humble (2017) has recently argued that there are vital Socratic traits in both Xenophon's methods and his central concerns. One key methodological trait in Xenophon that is arguably Socratic is his use of what Humble calls the "rhetoric of inquiry." The *Memorabilia* begins with Xenophon's wonder at the Athenians' conviction of Socrates, and the *Apology* answers the question of why Socrates defended himself so poorly at his trial. The *Cyropaedia*, Xenophon's ambitious effort to resolve his own wonder at how difficult it is to rule men, is perhaps the clearest example of Socratic influence outside the Socratica. It is a pseudo-historical thought experiment about imperial rule. Xenophon's other longer texts, the *Hellenica* and *Anabasis*, are less obviously inquiries. But for all its resemblance to Herodotus, the *Hellenica* is arguably more a didactic work making use of historiographical material to show the dangers of the pursuit of hegemony than a work of historiography.¹⁷ The *Anabasis* is perhaps even trickier to pin down than Xenophon's other major works, but is certainly as much a defense of Xenophon's leadership, and hence his conception of leadership, as the naïve memoir it is sometimes taken to be.¹⁸

17 For the anti-imperialist readings of the *Hellenica*, see Tuplin 1993 and Dillery 1995; Tuplin in particular makes the *Hellenica* out to be a far more didactic work than Herodotus' *Histories*. Gray 1989 sees *Hellenica* as more akin to Herodotus. For similarities in how Xenophon and Plato made use of history, particularly Persian history, see Tuplin 2018.

18 Christopher Moore well reminds me that this "rhetoric of inquiry" was common in much early Greek prose, so is not unique to Socratics; but it is at least worth pointing out that Xenophon's works are more in keeping with this tradition than is usually thought.

Xenophon's oeuvre as a whole thus shows a writer informed by experience with Socrates and confronting the real world of his experience and the events of his day. While Xenophon can certainly be didactic, as can his Socrates, there is also something dialectical about a body of work that allows some readers to label Xenophon anti-imperialist while others hold up his Cyrus as a model imperialist. Xenophon is dialectical in more literal senses in the *Spartan Constitution*, where his frequent questions prod readers toward reflection, not to mention the dialogue of the *Hiero* and the dialogues within the *Cyropaedia*.¹⁹ Dialogue is an excellent medium for irony, another Socratic element many but not all scholars find widespread in Xenophon, within the Socratic works and without. There is one sort of irony in a man who owed his living to a Spartan king (for whom he penned an effusive encomium, the *Agésilas*) writing of Sparta's failures in the *Hellenica* and Spartan flaws in the *Anabasis*.²⁰ We have already mentioned the tension between the condemnation of contemporary Sparta and Persia in works otherwise seeming to praise them. Historical ironies, at least in my view, play a large role in the *Symposium*, as Callias and Autolycus appear in that work as an idealized couple, but were attacked in comedy for their lasciviousness, and in the *Oeconomicus*, as Ischomachus' ideal marriage is undermined by the scandalous later career of his wife.²¹ But other scholars, it is only fair to point out, push back against such ironizing readings of Xenophon, arguing they show more about our contemporary fascination with irony, and the unhealthy influence of Leo Strauss, than they do about Xenophon.²²

Let us turn from the modes and methods of Xenophon's writing to one key theme in his work, the question of leadership: what makes for good individual leaders, and what allows some communities to effectively lead others. This does not seem to be the central concern of Socrates as he is traditionally understood, as the inquirer into ethics, and indeed not only Plato's but Xenophon's Socrates refuses to take a leadership role at Athens himself. Xenophon's Socrates, however, has a ready defense for his absence from politics: he trains others to lead (*Mem.* 1.6.15). Leadership was arguably the dominant ambition of the young aristocrats with whom Socrates associated:

Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, for example, is sometimes taken to be closer in spirit to a work like the the *Epidemiai* of Ion of Chios, an anecdotal memoir.

- 19 On the dialectical nature of the *Spartan Constitution*, see Humble 2014; for dialogue and other Socratic elements in the *Cyropaedia*, see Gera 1993, 26–131.
- 20 Millender 2012 provides a very anti-Spartan reading of the *Anabasis*.
- 21 For the case of Ischomachus' wife, see Nails 2002, 68–74, 176–8.
- 22 For an attack on ironic, “dark” readings of Xenophon, see Gray 2011; for the debate about Strauss, contrast Johnson 2012 with Dorion 2013, 51–92.

where young people today seek out education in pursuit of fulfilling careers, in Socrates' day they aimed to become leaders in their cities. Leadership was not a specialized skill to be learned in an MBA program in management, but was rather based above all on character, and as such was an eminently suitable topic for ethical reflection. One of Xenophon's most cherished beliefs is that the same traits make for success as an individual, and with one's family, friends, and city: good men are good fathers, good friends, and good leaders (*Mem.* 1.2.48, 4.2.11). So education in leadership is essentially the same thing as education *tout court*.²³ We do not consider it non-Socratic of Plato, after all, that his most famous work, the *Republic*, is about leadership, and if his philosopher-kings strike us as more philosophical than royal, then this may tell us more about Plato than about Socrates. It is Plato's Socrates who first conceives of and promotes philosophy as a way of life apart from all others: Xenophon's Socrates has no distinct Socratic mission, no special calling as a philosopher.²⁴ Xenophon's broader conception of Socrates may be truer to the original Socrates, and it remained a viable approach until the study of Socrates came to be dominated by academic philosophers in the twentieth century. If we approach Xenophon's non-Socratic works with this broader conception of what Socrates was about, we will find more of Socrates in Xenophon outside of Xenophon's Socratica.

2.3 *Socrates from Athens to Armenia*

Let us return from such generalities to the specific occasions where Socrates appears, explicitly or under a very thin disguise, in Xenophon's non-Socratic works. In the *Anabasis* Socrates appears immediately after Xenophon formally introduces himself into the narrative, at the low point of the expedition where the Greeks find themselves surrounded and leaderless (*An.* 3.1.4–7). Socrates had predicted that if Xenophon joined Cyrus, who had vigorously supported Sparta against Athens, he would become suspect at Athens, and advised him to consult Delphi. Xenophon twisted Socrates' advice by taking it to mean that he should merely ask which god to pray to in order to make the expedition an honorable success. Socrates chided him for doing so, but told him that now that the god had spoken, he had better do as the god said. Socrates' warning was well grounded, though we do not know on what grounds Xenophon was exiled. Certainly at the point at which Xenophon introduces Socrates in the *Anabasis*,

23 This is arguably the message of *Mem.* 2.1, which begins as a discussion solely of how to train leaders, but ultimately shows that all men should strive to be self-controlled.

24 For Plato's efforts to define philosophy as a genre, see Nightingale 1995; Moore 2018 argues that Xenophon chose not to characterize Socrates as a philosopher.

Socrates' warning looks wise, and while Xenophon did lead most of the Greeks honorably and safely out of Asia, the *Anabasis* is not the glorious account of Greek bravery it is sometimes taken to be. The Greek army nearly self-destructs after escaping from Persian territory, and Xenophon's leadership is questioned by his own troops. Xenophon thus shows considerable self-awareness in introducing Socrates here, as he does by depicting himself as a callow youth in the *Memorabilia*. He did not live an unexamined life.

As Xenophon tells the tale in his *Hellenica*, Socrates was the only member of the Athenian Council to oppose the illegal trial of the Athenian commanders who had failed to pick up bodies and survivors after the battle of Arginusae (*Hell.* 1.7.15; cf. *Mem.* 1.1.18, 4.4.2; *Pl. Ap.* 32b, *Grg.* 473e–474a). Socrates' brave devotion to the rule of law failed to prevent the condemnation of the commanders, but the Athenians themselves regretted their action soon enough (*Hell.* 1.7.35). Xenophon has Socrates praise obedience to the law in the *Memorabilia* as well. Thus Socratic piety and Socratic justice, two major themes of the *Memorabilia*, are also showcased in Socrates' two explicit appearances outside the Socratic works.

Socrates is clearly the inspiration for the curious tale of the Armenian sophist in the *Cyropaedia* (3.1).²⁵ In Xenophon's account, Cyrus the Elder goes to Armenia to put down a rebellion by the Armenian king. Cyrus marches so quickly to Armenia that the Armenian is captured without putting up a fight. Cyrus stages a trial for the king, at which he readily enough proves that the Armenian deserves, by his own standards, to be put to death (*Cyr.* 3.1.9–13); Cyrus' cross-examination has been well compared to a Socratic *elenchus*.²⁶ Cyrus allows the Armenian's son, Tigranes, a friend and hunting companion, to speak in his father's defense. Cyrus does so because he is eager to hear what Tigranes learned from the sophist who used to accompany him on their hunts (*Cyr.* 3.1.14).

In the debate that follows, the most Socratic argument comes not from the educated Tigranes but from Cyrus. Tigranes suggests that his father has learned moderation (*sôphrosunê*) through his defeat at Cyrus' hands. This argument can be supported by Xenophon's Socratica: Socrates suggests that noble enemies can make their enslaved enemies better men by chastising them (*σωφρονίσαντες*), making them moderate and allowing them to lead easier lives (*Oec.* 1.23). But the Armenian is not to be made a slave, at least in any literal sense, and the variety of moderation taught at once by defeat in war is not particularly Socratic, as Cyrus observes.

25 Good accounts of the Armenian sophist include Tatum 1989, 138–45; Gera 1993, 78–98.

26 Gera 1993, 82–3.

So are you saying that *sôphrosunê* is an affection (πάθημα) of the soul, like pain, rather than something one learns (μάθημα)? Surely if one must become wise (φρόνιμον) in order to become moderate (σώφρονα), one cannot immediately become moderate after being foolish?

Cyr. 3.1.17

The argument that follows reveals one of the *arcana imperii* of the *Cyropaedia*: the best subordinates are, at least in certain circumstances, the most fearful ones. Hence the Armenian king, who will, after his pardon, owe everything he has to Cyrus, will be an ideal subordinate. It is also important that the Armenian will owe everything directly to Cyrus, not to his uncle Cyaxares, king of Media, who is still nominally Cyrus' superior at this point in the story; the Armenian's submission to Cyrus thus assists Cyrus in his ambition not only to defend Media but to supplant Cyaxares as its ruler. And the closing argument in the debate, the only argument made by Tigranes that Cyrus does not successfully refute, is that the Armenian king is the person best positioned to provide Cyrus with immediate help, as replacing him would cause chaos in the kingdom. Cyrus is happy to be able to fulfill his promise to make the Armenian a better friend to Cyaxares after he had rebelled than he had been previously (*Cyr.* 3.1.31).

The scene thus brilliantly depicts Cyrus' amazingly effective ability to turn enemies into friends. But is it Socratic? It might rather seem that Cyrus makes use of the dialogue not to guide his deliberations but to shield his cynical calculation that a humiliated rival will better serve his immediate purposes than any available alternative. Cyrus himself does not articulate the arguments that lead him to pardon the Armenian, leaving that to Tigranes; he thus keeps to the high moral ground, and does not commit himself to following the same policy in other cases.

At the dinner held to celebrate the reconciliation between Cyrus and the Armenian, Cyrus asks why the sophist, a man Tigranes so admired, is not present. Tigranes explains that his father executed him because he thought that the sophist was corrupting his son. So the Armenian sophist, like Socrates, was accused of corrupting the youth.

And yet that man was so noble that when he was about to die, he summoned me and spoke to me. 'Don't you, Tigranes,' he said, 'be at all angry with your father because he is going to kill me. For your father isn't doing this because of enmity toward you, but out of ignorance. And whenever people make mistakes out of ignorance, I for my part consider their deeds to be unintentional.'

Cyr. 3.1.38

The king's precise worry was that the sophist was making his son admire the sophist more than he admired his own father. Alienation of sons from their fathers was another charge made against Socrates (*Mem.* 1.2.49). The quick transition from one charge to the next shows that they are really two sides of the same coin: where others see corruption of the youth, fathers see alienation. Alienation of sons from fathers had already provided Aristophanes with the plot for the *Clouds*. Yet in the Armenian case, at any rate, the charge is very clearly false: Tigranes has just bravely defended his father. Cyrus continues in his reconciliatory mode.

And Cyrus said, "Well, by the gods, Armenian, you seem to me to have made a human mistake; and you, Tigranes, forgive your father." These are the sort of things they said then and this is how they cheered one another, as is fitting on the occasion of a reconciliation; and after mounting their chariots with their wives they drove off, glad at heart.

Cyr. 3.1.40

This seems a remarkably jovial ending to a dinner celebrating Cyrus' decision not to execute the Armenian, at which it was also revealed the Armenian executed a man his son greatly admired due to unwarranted suspicions about his son's loyalty.

Scholars looking to read this passage for insights into Xenophon's attitude toward Socrates have come to two conclusions. The first is that Xenophon here makes something of a muddle of Socratic doctrine. The second is that just as Cyrus forgives the Armenian for executing the sophist, so should the Athenians be forgiven for executing Socrates.²⁷ Neither of these claims is very persuasive, to my mind.

The key piece of evidence that Xenophon misunderstood Socratic doctrine is the Armenian sophist's statement about unintentional wrongdoing. The sophist tells Tigranes that he should forgive mistakes done through ignorance, as they are unintentional. This has been taken as a banal misunderstanding of the Socratic argument that all wrongdoing is done through ignorance, and that the proper response to *all* wrongdoing is teaching.²⁸ But the Armenian sophist does not contradict Socratic doctrine; he rather gives a partial account of it that is entirely apropos to the situation at hand. The more general point that no one does wrong intentionally would hardly have soothed Tigranes' anger against his father: what is wanted is an argument that suggests that Tigranes' father is

27 For these claims, see Gera 1993, 92–3; 2007, 40–1; Huss 1999, 38–49.

28 This is the doctrine implied in *Mem.* 3.9.4–5, 4.5.6, and 4.6.6. But for a contrasting account of Xenophon's Socrates' moral intellectualism, see Weiss 2018.

more worthy of forgiveness than others. Absolute philosophical consistency here would render the passage completely maladroit on the level of the drama between the characters.

What, though, are we to make of Cyrus' advice that the Armenian be forgiven for killing the Socrates figure? The first thing to note is that this is the second time the Armenian king has been forgiven for wrongdoing within this chapter of the *Cyropaedia*. In both cases the forgiveness is unSocratic or perhaps even anti-Socratic. Cyrus explicitly forgives the Armenian the first time because he concludes that he will be a good friend; in the second instance, Cyrus surely wishes to ensure that relations between his friend, Tigranes, and Tigranes' father, the Armenian king, remain on a good footing, as Tigranes will accompany him on campaign as head of the Armenian forces. Cyrus' decision to retain the Armenian as his friend is based on principles other than those Socrates advocates. For Socrates advises his followers to seek out men of good character as friends, to improve their own characters to be worthy of such friends, and to bind themselves to their friends by benefits given and received, developing a lasting and reciprocal web of gratitude (χάρης). Bad men, by contrast, are unreliable, because they cannot be counted on to reciprocate.²⁹

An obvious counter to this view is that in the *Cyropaedia* we are speaking of *philoï* who are really allies, while Socrates was speaking of *philoï* of a more personal sort. But we are not dealing with two different sorts of relationships linked only via the broad range of the Greek term. The central issue in the debate between Cyrus and Tigranes is precisely whether the Armenian king has the sort of character Cyrus should seek in his friends: character determines both who is the best ally and who the best personal friend. Tigranes loses this debate on the merits, because any helpful traits the Armenian possesses—most importantly his fear—are matters more of affect (πάθημα) than knowledge (μάθημα). Yet Cyrus ultimately pardons the Armenian, because it is in his own interest to do so. Xenophon's Socrates himself often focuses on self-interest, including when noting the value of friends, but he never reaches self-interest by the route that Cyrus does in this argument.

My account of the Armenian sophist has emphasized the contrasts with Socrates rather than the similarities: Socrates was, after all, neither Armenian nor a sophist, nor was he known to accompany his charges on hunting expeditions. James Tatum similarly argues that "the whole encounter with Tigranes and his father might be summed up as everything the *Memorabilia* is not" (1989, 145). On this reading Xenophon's Cyrus toys with Socratic arguments but is interested only in gaining power. But those who believe that Cyrus is

29 For friendship and Xenophon's Socrates, see *Mem.* 2.4–6 and van Berkel 2010.

Xenophon's hero or even his alter ego will either minimize the non-Socratic elements here, or argue that Xenophon is going beyond his Socrates. The stakes here are rather high, for at least on some such readings Xenophon is all but washing his hands of Socrates, first by forgiving Athens for executing him and then by replacing Socrates as his ideal with Cyrus. The least that can be said, I think, is that we ought not to pluck Cyrus' decision to pardon the king for his killing of the Armenian Socrates out of context, or read the Armenian sophist's words on unintentional wrongdoing as a failed effort to articulate a comprehensive philosophical position. Socrates, Xenophon found, was good to think with, even in Armenia. This means that we too must do some thinking to get at what Xenophon was about.

I have argued that Xenophon aims to supplement and correct other accounts of Socrates, rather than to reject and replace them, and that the moments when Plato's Socrates peeks out from behind the Xenophontic curtain are not evidence of Xenophon's slipping up but indications that his Socrates was built on the foundations laid by other Socratics and by Socrates himself. And while Xenophon certainly has Socrates discuss matters of more interest to Xenophon than to Socrates—farming, Persia, military logistics—he most often does so to make larger points about character and leadership. Socrates, as we have seen, is also a major presence outside of Xenophon's Socratic works. For those scholars who see Xenophon not only as a straightforward, didactic author, but as a writer who deliberately leaves us with tensions within and between works, the most profound influence of Socrates may be Xenophon's habit of leaving us with more questions than answers. Cyrus appears to be Xenophon's model leader, but his Persia falls apart upon his death, and Sparta, Xenophon's real-world ideal, loses her empire, and deservedly so. The final puzzle may lie in the fact that Xenophon admired no one more than Socrates, yet led a life that in many ways differed as much as can be imagined from the life led by his master. Xenophon chose to leave Socrates and Athens to seek adventure with Cyrus, but found that he brought Socrates along with him, one way or another. Socrates' influence on all of Xenophon's work accounts for much of its continued interest to us, and it is Xenophon's wide experiences and interests outside of Athens that give his Socratic works a special place in the reception of Socrates.

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PART 2

Greek Philosophy



Socrates in Aristotle's History of Philosophy

Christopher Moore

1 Introduction

Several late biographical sources on Aristotle link him in two ways with Socrates, his *Doktorgroßvater*, neither of which is likely but both of which hint at some truth. Relying on a letter purportedly from Aristotle to Alexander of Macedon, they say that he studied with Socrates for three years.¹ He could not have, growing up in Macedonian Stagira fifteen and more years after Socrates' execution.² Yet the pedagogical and "academic" lineage is close to direct—the teacher of one's teacher is (also) one's teacher—and Aristotle refers often to Plato's teachings in his dialogues as coming from Socrates. The same ancient *Lives of Aristotle* also report that, under threat from harsh anti-Macedonian reprisals following Alexander's conquest of Athens, Aristotle fled to Chalcis to avoid legal reprisal and a capital sentence: he claimed "not to want Athens to sin against philosophy twice."³ It is doubtful he would have said this: in no extant work does he mention Socrates' trial, call Socrates' efforts "philosophy," or present Socrates as a moral hero. Yet the parallels of political and intellectual history really are striking. Both anecdotes thus stumble in their strain to connect the lives of Aristotle with Socrates, a connection at once undeniable but with a content or form deceptively difficult to establish.

This difficulty may have roots in Aristotle's own writing. In extant work he never makes reference to Socrates' role in his pedagogical lineage. Maybe it goes without saying, Plato's tutelage with Socrates and his own with Plato being evident facts. Even aside from personal relations, however, Aristotle gives Socrates remarkably little explicit discussion, given the importance of

1 *Vita Marciana* 5 (~ *Vita Vulgata* 4); *Vita Latina* 5, adding that it was the Delphic Apollo that sent him to Athens.

2 Some scholars have interpreted the referent of "Socrates" as Socrates the Younger, an important mathematician in the Academy, mentioned frequently by Plato (*Thet.* 147d2, *Soph.* 218b, *Plt. passim*, probably *Ep.* 11 358d–e, cf. Arist. *Metaph.* Z.11 1036b25); others have emended the text to read "Isocrates" (e.g., Chroust 1973, 1.96–103). Neither interpretation gets corroboration: Düring 1957, 108; Natali 2013, 156 n. 32.

3 *Vita Marciana* 41 (~ *Vita Vulgata* 19); *Vita Latina* 13, Elias in *Ar. Cat.* 123.15, Sen. *Otio* 8.1, Orig. *Adv. Cel.* 1.380. Cf. Natali 2013, 63–4.

Socrates to Plato and other fourth-century philosophers. In the thirteen-book *Metaphysics*, for example, Socrates appears meaningfully only three times, each time in subordinate clauses or sub-arguments. Across the three *Ethics*, the philosophical topic that Socrates practically inaugurated, he earns about a dozen sentences, most relatively ungenerous and about a narrow range of topics. Across thousands of pages of Aristotle's private and public work, we know only about forty substantive references to Socrates.⁴ To be sure, Aristotle also uses the name "Socrates" in logical examples, but his reason and even referent are uncertain;⁵ and he refers to the authoritative voice in Platonic dialogues as "Socrates," but with so little sensitivity for the person that he calls the *Laws'* speaker, the Athenian Stranger, "Socrates" too.⁶

A philosopher's relative silence about another philosopher at a two-generation remove may in general matter little; I, for example, have never cited my advisor's (still-living) advisor. But Socrates and Aristotle are special cases! Socrates has perhaps the leading position in our history of philosophy: as icon of the practice, as pivot in its focus, and as inspiration to its first real impresario, Plato. Aristotle had a zealous concern to articulate the history of his discipline, to use it as a crèche for dialectical endoxa, and to reflect on philosophical methodology and its relevance to understanding the human condition. Would we not expect Socrates to play a more explicit role in Aristotle's writing?

Not all scholars have been so puzzled, for at least three kinds of reasons. Some believe that by the late 370s even Plato had moved on to his own constructive metaphysical and epistemological interests, and the Academy in general focused on mathematics; Aristotle would have entered an Academy already sentimentally and intellectually divorced from Socrates.⁷ Important

4 Deman 1942, which collections and discusses Aristotle's testimony of Socrates, provides forty-one texts; this includes references in works of dubious provenance and those using the adjective "Socratic," as in the genre of dialogue writing. See also SSR I C 1–40.

5 E.g., *Metaph.* A 991a25–27, *Soph. el.* 5, etc. Taylor 1911, 43–44, argues that the name refers to Socrates the Younger; Jackson 1920, 194–195, infers the existence of a portrait of Socrates (the Elder) in Aristotle's lecture room; Fazzo 2013, 331, says Socrates the Elder has a ubiquitous reputation and "paradigmatic individuality." I observe that Plato already had Socrates use himself as a generic example in, e.g., *Phd.* 98c and *Th.* 203a.

6 As authoritative Platonic voice: see, e.g., *Gen. Corr.* 335b10; *Rh.* 1367b7–9 and 1415b30–32 (both about a remark in the *Menexenus*, though the imperfect *ἐλεγον* in one of them might suggest that Aristotle believes that the dialogue captured a favorite Socratic saying; cf. Taylor 1911, 45); *Rh.* 1419a8–12 (from the *Apology*, which Aristotle might but need not take as historical); *Pol.* 1260a20–21, 1261a6–1264b40, 1265a11 (*Laws*); etc.

7 E.g., Jaeger 1962, 13–23; Dillon's 2003 study of the "Old Academy" reveals this in particular; there is no index entry for "Socrates," and its two substantive references to Socrates make the

parts of this view are quite plausible. From the multi-millennial perspective, Socrates matters fundamentally, and matters in ways intriguingly related to Aristotle; but Aristotle had fresher fish to fry, and so it is no wonder that he did not write more about Socrates. Other scholars spend time reflecting not on the paucity of Aristotle's references to Socrates but on their provenance and thus value for establishing facts about the historical Socrates—treating Aristotle as a source on a par with the comic poets and first-generation Socratics. Such scholarship focuses on two primary issues. Some seeks to ascertain possible non-Platonic or non-Xenophontic sources for Aristotle's ascriptions of views and traits to Socrates, or at least independent interpretation of familiar evidence.⁸ And some seeks to distinguish Aristotle's references to “Socrates” as a wholly Platonic character from “Socrates” as a historical person—or from the Platonic character taken to be historically transparent (as, for example, in the *Apology* or *Protagoras*).⁹ Since Aristotle must have had access to oral lore and written material full of Socratica but now lost to us, such investigation has much independent value. The final group of unpuzzled scholars would say that my question includes a misleading qualifier. Few as the “explicit” references to Socrates may be, Aristotle in fact treats Socrates with the gravity that he deserves, in particular in the ethical works, where he appears to take on Socratic themes at great length.¹⁰ It is like a twentieth-century philosopher with Frege or Heidegger—pervasively even without citation. Recognizing Aristotle's ongoing conversation with Socrates enriches our appreciation for

point: Plato was influenced by Socrates' method (16), and then not until Arcesilaus took over the Academy in the early third century BCE did Socrates, Socratic skepticism, and aporetic Socratic dialogues regain attention (235–7).

- 8 Some suggest he has no independent value, e.g., Taylor 1911 (wholesale reliance on Plato; in his 1933/53, 141, he notes that nearly all could come from *Protagoras* alone); Chroust 1952 (wholesale reliance on Xenophon); Waterfield 2013, 4, 8–9. Some see that he relies on a broader array of meaningful sources, e.g., Deman 1942, Smith 2018. Others grant his reliance on Plato and Xenophon but judge his insight valuable, e.g., Bokwonew 1913; De Strycker 1950, 222–223 (Aristotle proves that Socrates was a philosopher, not just “un grand homme de cœur”); Gigon 1959; Giannantoni 1993, 584.
- 9 This has been investigated under the rubric of “Fitzgerald's canon,” the hypothesis of Fitzgerald 1850, 163–4, that ὁ Σωκράτης (with the definite article) refers to Plato's Socrates, and Σωκράτης (without the article) to the man himself, a view followed by Grant 1885, 2.188, Bywater 1909, comm. ad *Poet.* 1454a30, and Ross 1922, but vigorously denied by Taylor 1911, 42–51, and moderately so by Lacey 1971, 46–7, who observes Aristotle's various motivations to discuss Socrates. Vlastos 1991, 91–8, 262–4, and Smith 2018 argue that Aristotle subscribed to Platonic “developmentalism,” the view that in Plato's early dialogues the character Socrates is historical, but not in the later dialogues; thus assessment of Aristotle may confer support to contemporary views of Plato's project.
- 10 E.g., Tessitore 1988; Cox 1989; Burger 2008.

the urgency and fecundity of Socrates' ideas and for the direction and goals of Aristotle's philosophy.

By contrast with the approaches taken above, this chapter investigates the way Aristotle thinks about Socrates *as a predecessor*. No doubt Aristotle concentrated on contemporary questions; no doubt his claims about Socrates speak to the solubility of the "Socratic Problem"; and no doubt his ethical writings provide answers to questions earlier articulated in Socratic literature. But we may still want to know what role Socrates, a long-dead Athenian who wrote nothing and asserted little, plays in Aristotle's thinking, especially from Aristotle's own vantage. We may put it sententiously: for Aristotle, a philosopher, *who* is Socrates?

As we will see, the answer seems mixed. Socrates is a well-known Athenian who exemplifies personality traits that Aristotle does not treat as explicitly conducive to philosophical discovery: *eirōneia*, *megalopsuchia*, *melancholia*. An entire literary genre adopted his name, though neither he nor his students invented it. He introduces two major modes of knowledge-production, induction to and deduction from universals, but disclaims having any knowledge. The sole constellation of theses attributed to Socrates, the equivalence of knowledge and virtue, Aristotle dismisses as undeserving even of charitable reconstructions and yet uses to structure much of his core ethical discussion, and on occasion admits to have a deeper truth. Socrates has a novel idea about definitions, but cashed out mainly as influential on Plato, even if Socrates ultimately had the more modestly tenable attitude toward them. Never called a "sophist," he is also never directly called a "philosopher"—neither a student of changeable nature (a *phusikos* or *phusiologos*) nor proponent of the absence of change (a Parmenides or Zeno), neither the founder nor epitome of a learned pursuit, neither a great teacher nor a great professor of views (a Protagoras or Antisthenes), and yet the *only* such person within the horizon of Aristotle's history of *philosophia* in *Metaphysics A*, and part of the story of all such people.

In sum, Socrates seems for Aristotle something of a *sophos* in a long lineage of *sophoi*, a culture hero, a remarkable force in Athenian intellectual history, pertinent to *philosophia* properly so-called but not centrally or exclusively. The closest parallel, even with obvious divergences, might be Thales: a man with a single constellation of theses about the primacy of water, significant especially for instigating Milesian monism, and exemplifying the philosopher's disdain for utilitarian work despite his extraordinary competence at it, and with political advice-giving of a sort typified by others of the Seven Sages. Just as Thales' biography transcends that of the earliest history of philosophy and enters *kulturgeschichte*, so too Socrates'. Though not a primary historical

or contemporary philosophical interlocutor of Aristotle's—not as the Pythagoreans, or Plato, or his Academic contemporaries Speusippus and Xenocrates, or even Empedocles and Anaxagoras, or Democritus and Archytas were—his influence on philosophy seems to have been as great as any of theirs. Like Thales', his influence was not wholly external, as it were distinct from the ideas themselves, but it was not for the sheer logical appeal of the ideas, either. In Socrates' case in particular, the half-in half-out contribution had to do with his investigative method and his commitment to it, and his bequest of that way of being an intellectual to the history of cultural reflection.

Of course, this de-philosophization describes *Aristotle's* attitude toward Socrates; it does not tell *us* how to think about Socrates. Whatever scholars think about Plato's eventual judgment of Socrates as philosophical model, or the judgment of any other first-generation Socratic, none can deny Plato's and others' appreciation of Socrates as a practitioner of a legitimate form of *philosophia*. What a study of Aristotle's conception of Socrates ultimately provides, I think, is an image of the way conceptions of philosophy and boundaries of philosophical salience evolved in its earliest generations. Whereas for the Socratics *philosophia* amounted to mutually self-improving conversations about virtue and its conditions, for Aristotle and fellow Academics *philosophia* amounted to *philosophêmata* and explanatory knowledge, increasingly subtle and defensible answers to increasingly defined canonical questions. Whether Socrates philosophized depends on who is asking and when.

I begin this study with Aristotle's earliest publications, the now fragmentary lost dialogues that he wrote while studying with Plato in the Academy. They show esteem for Socrates and treat him as already culturally significant but attribute to him little of doctrinal significance. I then focus on the most influential of these works, the *Protrepticus*, Aristotle's blockbuster exhortation to philosophy from about 353 BCE. The Pythagorean Iamblichus of Chalcis excerpted much of this dialogue in his own works, and scholars using improved techniques of reconstruction have recovered an increasingly high percentage of it.¹¹ These excerpts make no reference to Socrates.¹² This puts into starkest form the “problem” of Aristotle's reception of Socrates. It seems probable that,

11 See Moraux 1951, 192–3, with Chroust 1964, xv, for estimates of the percentage recovered. The most complete collection of the fragments is Hutchinson and Johnson (forthcoming).

12 Indeed, Iamblichus does not mention Socrates at all in *On the Pythagorean Life* [VP], *Protreptic* [Pro.], or *On the Common Mathematical Sciences* [DCMS], three works in which he excerpted Aristotle's dialogue.

in contrast to many twenty-first century history of philosophy classes, Aristotle does not appeal to the life and work of Socrates as a motivating ideal. The chapter's next two sections deal with Aristotle's originally unpublished ("esoteric") works, particularly the *Metaphysics* and the several *Ethics*. We see how Aristotle's seemingly incidental remarks belie his commitment to Socrates' signal importance to philosophy. But the importance might be rather on the level of a Hesiod—profound and superlatively influential, but not the voice in a conversation that Aristotle can really engage and on which he can work his dialectical method. This is despite Socrates and Aristotle's sharing a notion of philosophy as intersubjective criticism concerned with fundamental explanation. Possible explanations may include Socrates' decision not to write (his "*agraphia*"), his method of questioning, or his lack of interest in physical inquiry and theoretical system building. At the chapter's end I attend to the consequences for the ongoing study of Socrates and Aristotle.¹³

2 The Dialogues

Aristotle mentions Socrates in extant fragments from three dialogues, and probably did so in more.¹⁴ At least some of Aristotle's dialogues seem at least partially to have imitated Plato's, literary versions of Socrates' and others' retellings of Socratic conversations.¹⁵ Aristotle himself writes that, by contrast with mathematical writings, Socratic dialogues "have character" (ἔχουσιν ... ἥθη) and depict "choices" (προαίρεσιν) and "goals" (τὸ ... οὗ ἔνεκα) (*Rh.* 1417a18–21).¹⁶ While this hardly implies that, for Aristotle, practical reasoning in literary form is peculiar to depictions of Socrates, it suggests that he takes something about those depictions to do so particularly well—perhaps by treating argumentatively dense conversation as fine-grainedly persistent not

13 I do not try to account for the historical development of Aristotle's attitude toward Socrates or toward Plato (as a proxy for or contrast to Socrates), given the insuperable challenges to dating his lectures and—even if they could be dated—the insufficiency of evidence from each period to infer some such development. Examples of the developmentalist trend in Aristotelian scholarship are Jaeger 1962, 3–166, and Chroust 1973, 2.231–69. The best we can say is that Aristotle started his career writing dialogues and may not have continued doing so much after Plato's death.

14 Ross 1952 (English translation of select fragments) neglects to include "Socrates" in the index; Ross 1955 (Greek text of those fragments) includes the name.

15 Plut. *adv. Col.* 1118c, referring to "Platonic works"; Ross 1952, ix.

16 On Aristotle's remarks in *Rhetoric* about Socratic dialogue, see Deman 1942, 28–33 (*contra* Taylor 1911, 60–61, who thinks it simply means dramatic flourishes); on related remarks, about their charms, in the *Politics* (1265a10–12), see Halliwell 2006.

purely for the sake of theoretical completeness but because it matters to good decision-making.

The dialogue *On Good Birth* (*Peri eugeneias*) contrasts nobility of birth to current wealth, and, finding the first superior, discusses the nature of that nobility and describes a theory of “original stock.”¹⁷ This dialogue contains the claim not found in Plato or Xenophon that Socrates had two wives, Xanthippe and Myrto, a progeny of Aristides the Just.¹⁸ A piece of gossip usually cited for the sake of its curiosity, scandal, or information about Athenian law, this fact of Socrates’ domestic life seems here to have been part of, or inferred from, an interlocutor’s argument from authority. He says that Socrates equated good birth with good ancestors, illustrating this by linking the excellence of Aristides’ daughter (to whom the dialogue must have claimed he was betrothed) to her father’s goodness.¹⁹ This interlocutor, presumably the main one—and thus plausibly Aristotle himself—later agrees with a modified version of Socrates’ view.²⁰ Aristotle discusses “good birth” again in the *Rhetoric* (1390b16–21), where he again cites Socrates, in a trio with Cimon and Pericles, as an instance of stable (στάσιμα) stock whose descendants degenerated into silly and sluggish (ἀβελτερίαν καὶ νωθρότητα) people. Together these remarks suggest a lore about Socrates and, more importantly, the authority of his views about matters of fundamental human concern: education and the inheritance of virtue.

A dialogue called the *Sophist* mentions Empedocles and Zeno as the inventors of rhetoric and of dialectic, respectively. We know no more about the dialogue; but this attention to eminent fifth-century intellectuals and their innovations means that it probably mentioned Socrates too. The title, in the singular, allows that the dialogue follows Plato’s eponymous work, which also discusses figures later considered “philosophers” (*Sph.* 242c7–243a4), such that Aristotle could be, in a roundabout way, be defining the “sophist,”

17 This appears a topic of considerable Academic interest; see, e.g., Plato’s *Charmides*, where Socrates seems wryly to praise the relevance of Charmides’ noble lineage (157e1–158b4), and his *Protagoras*, where Socrates suggests that fathers do not transfer virtue to their sons (319e1–320b3); cf. DL 2.31.

18 DL 2.26, Plut. *Arist.* 27.2, Ath. 13.555d–556a. Plutarch registers some doubt about the dialogue’s authorship, a skepticism followed, e.g., by Taylor 1911, 61–62 and Taylor 2000, 5 (though I do not see why the ascription is “implausibl[e]”); see Woodbury 1973 for details.

19 Stob. 4.29.a25.

20 Stob. 4.29.c52; for Aristotle as the main character in his dialogues, see Jaeger 1962, 28–9. See Schuhl 1968, 86, for caution about identifying the dialogue’s characters, 89–90 on Socrates, and 92–8 on the dialogue’s relation to the esoteric works; see also Chroust 1973, 2.23–4.

an interest Aristotle has elsewhere.²¹ But it could also simply describe various *sophistai*, which for Aristotle can mean simply *sophoi*, “eminently wise people”; in our fragment, Empedocles and Zeno are being treated as culture heroes, innovators of fundamental features of the intellectual scene.²² On either picture of the dialogue, Socrates could play a significant role: perhaps as a leading boundary case between “sophist” and something else (as Plato’s sixth definition of a sophist in the *Sophist* has parallels with Socrates: 226b–231b), or as a marvel in both rhetoric and dialectic. The mere fact that Aristotle wrote a dialogue analyzing the “Sophist” in which he canvassed early practitioners of argumentative speech means that he shares with Plato a concern to consider *philosophia* against the background of its sibling modes of discussion, a concern that for Plato really does seem to come from his experience of Athenian anger at Socrates.

In a dialogue to which a late source refers as “Corinthian”—scholars have thought it might be the *Nerinthus*—Aristotle says that Plato’s *Gorgias* drew a Corinthian farmer to study with Plato.²³ Aristotle might be showing an appreciation for the effect of Socrates, as hero of the dialogue, though we cannot confirm this; he might instead attribute exhortative success to Plato. He often takes what Socrates says in Platonic dialogues as Plato’s views; and readers of dialogues in the fourth century often heard the lead interlocutor as expositing the views of their authors.²⁴ In any event, this is Aristotle’s most direct remark about the protreptic effect of his teacher’s writings.²⁵ The discovery could conceivably have inspired his own *Protrepticus*.²⁶

Aristotle has a half-lost set of lectures, *Poetics*, in which he probably mentioned the character “Socrates” in Aristophanes’ *Clouds*²⁷—indicating the enduring popularity of the play and its antagonist, at least within the Academic/

21 In the *Metaphysics* alone Aristotle discusses sophistry at B.2 996a32–35, Γ.2 1004b17–23, E.2 1026b15, K.3 1061b8, and K.8 1064b27–29. On *sophistai* as *sophoi*, see DL 1.12; *Etymol. mag.* s.v. σοφιστής.

22 The intriguing discussion of this dialogue in Chroust 1973, 2.24–5, favoring the Platonic model, overruns the evidence.

23 Them. Or. 295c–d.

24 Murphy 2013.

25 Halliwell 2006 discusses Aristotle’s other explicit remark about Plato’s dialogues (though couched as a remark about all Socratic dialogues), at *Pol.* 1265a10–13: τὸ μὲν οὖν περιττὸν ἔχουσι πάντες οἱ τοῦ Σωκράτους λόγοι καὶ τὸ κομψὸν καὶ τὸ καινοτόμον καὶ τὸ ζητητικόν, καλῶς δὲ πάντα ἴσως χαλεπόν.

26 Stob. 4.32.21: Zeno tells a story of Crates’ reading of Aristotle’s *Protrepticus*. See Chroust 1973, 2.26–27, for discussion of the scholarship that takes *Nerinthus* as autobiographical.

27 In the lost *Poetics* 2, as reconstructed from the *Tractatus Coislinianus* (Janko 1987, 52): Socrates was humorously called “Socratiddles” in Aristophanes (3.2.2.iv.c).

Peripatetic community—and definitely as the namesake of the form (τοὺς Σωκρατικούς λόγους) that, with Sophron's and Xenarchus' mimes, constitutes an unnamed genre.²⁸ In the fragmentary popular work *On Poets*, which includes significant discussion of Empedocles,²⁹ and so perhaps other philosophers (or at least those writing in verse, or in ways unlike mathematicians), he speaks of *dialogoi* as founded by Alexamenos of Teos and not, as others thought, Zeno of Elea or Plato, probably implying that Socratic writings fall into this subcategory of the unnamed genre.³⁰ These references and debate about generic taxonomy point to Socrates' powerful influence on the writerly scene: his memory seems to have colonized a previously independent generic form. They also suggest Aristotle's refusal to read Socratic material as purely philosophical or to treat him as the efficient cause of (philosophy's) dialogue form. Again we see Socrates as cultural phenomenon rather more than as a philosopher with whose ideas one must reckon. Indeed, the entire *idea* of a "Socratic dialogue" suggests that Socrates stands only for a *kind* of talking, not a subject or view expressed through such talking, by contrast with the various philosophers Aristotle addresses throughout his oeuvre.

Another fragment clinches the view of Socrates as *sophos* in a lineage of Greek *sophoi*:

A certain (τις) Antilochus of Lemnos and Antiphon the Soothsayer played rivals (ἐφιλονείκει) against him, according to Aristotle in the third book of *On Poetry*, as Cylon of Croton did against Pythagoras, and Syagrus against Homer while he was alive, and Xenophanes of Colophon after he had died, and Cercops against Hesiod while he was alive, and when dead the aforementioned Xenophones; and Amphimenes of Cos against Pindar, Pherecydes against Thales, Salarus of Priene against Bias; Antimenidas and Alcaeus against Pittacus, Sosibius against Anaxagoras, and Timocreon against Simonides.

DL 2.46

Attributing the whole sentence to Aristotle's research provides the context in which Aristotle thought about Socrates, even if Diogenes or his source sharply paraphrases him. Socrates has elite company, *sophoi* all: Homer and Hesiod the

28 Arist. *Poet.* 1447a28–b.

29 DL 8.51–2, 57–8.

30 DL 3.48; Ath. 11.505b–c. In *On Poets* Aristotle may also discuss the genre of Plato's dialogues (DL 3.37) and the *Republic's* expulsion of comedy and tragedy (Procl. in *Remp.* 1.42.2).

leading epic poets and consolidators of Greek mythology and ethics; Thales, Bias, and Pittacus long treated as among the Seven Sages, superlative in politics and gnomic advice; Pindar and Simonides the most studied and politically relevant of early fifth-century poets, the latter important in Athens; Anaxagoras the watershed Athenian philosopher and Periclean advisor. If not all wrote in verse—the Seven Sages are uncertain, and Socrates doubtful—all had or came to have major cultural relevance as continuing touchstones of generic or practical perfection. That each had one or more rivals points to the desirability of their status.³¹ We know nothing of Socrates' nemesis Antilochus, but then again Aristotle may not have either (given his uncertain τις), which seems to treat the rivalry as the stuff of legend. Aristotle knew a range of Socratic apologetic writings which may have contained such material, for example Theodectes' defense speech *Socrates*, from which he quotes: "What temple has he profaned? What gods recognized by the state has he not honored?" (*Rh.* 1399a7–9).³² By the time Aristotle wrote *On Poetry*, Socrates' middle age would be no more contemporary affairs than that of Anaxagoras or Pindar. We know more about Antiphon, if he is the well-known Sophist whose conflict with Socrates provides Xenophon a set-piece in *Memorabilia* 1.6.³³ There, Antiphon seeks to win away Socrates' associates, and to do so by highlighting the poverty of Socrates as a model of educational promise: he is literally poor and, apparently, incapable of acting in his self-interest. This itself suggests the power of Socrates' image, that despite or because of his poverty he drew students—and not just any students, but ones wealthy or promising enough to attract Antiphon's attention. Whatever the meaning of the rivalry as Aristotle understood it, this remarkable fragment raises a question: why did Aristotle treat of Socrates in the present company of *sophoi*, in a work on poetry? A complete answer would require what we cannot here provide, that we spell out fifth- and fourth-century trends in the historiographical reconstruction of culture. This would include, I suspect, the priority of lineages of musical and

31 Cylon is said, on having been rejected as a member of the Pythagorean circle, to have caused Pythagoras' exile or death or arson of Pythagorean dwellings (Iambl. *VP* 35, §§248–9); at DL 8.49, Cylon is said to be a rival (ἀντιπαράτασσεσθαι) of Pythagoras just as Antilochus ("Antidocus" vel "Antidicus": MSS; vid. DL 2.46) is of Socrates. Whoever Sosibius is, perhaps he knew Anaxagoras as a partisan of Pericles' and helped force him into exile (there is a Spartan grammarian named Sosibius from the third century BCE, who solved difficulties in ancient authors, as Anaxagoras seems also to have done; there was also an Athenian sculptor possibly contemporary with Anaxagoras, whose relevance could be connected to Pericles' extensive building program; for references for both, see Smith 1849, s.vv.).

32 See Murphy (in this volume) for other early fourth-century speeches about Socrates.

33 See the discussion at Pendrick 2002, 239–40, who follows [Plut.] *X orat.* 832c.

poetic innovators, and subsequent sloughing off of subsidiary and extraneous lists, given the proximity, both actually and conceptually, between various types of cultural innovators, and because the content of poetry and song—political advice, civic history—requires that one include forerunners in theme and topic and not just in generic form. Given Socrates' literary importance to the eponymous "Socratic writings," his political salience as demonstrated by Old Comedy's plays about him, his apparent circulation with such *literati* as Damon and Euripides, his students' (or students' students') research interest in artistic matters, his overall excellence as a talker in a society of great talkers, and the ease of building him into *sophos* lineages as a contemporary of Anaxagoras and teacher of major intellectuals of Plato's generation, we can see what leads to Aristotle's inclusion of Socrates in such elevated company.

Socrates probably appears again in a *sophos*-lineage in Aristotle's *On Philosophy*.³⁴ If he does, Aristotle seems to have presented him as causally important but philosophically incidental. This can be seen, however, only against the background of the book's structure. We know that this work was in three sections; Books 2–3, for which we have the most information (as being most philosophically interesting to Aristotle's successors, at least those whose books endured) deal with Plato's Ideas and the highest reaches of Aristotle's theology. Book 1, by contrast, appears to have given a compact history or even pre-history of the discipline of *philosophia*, likely a forerunner to the physics-inflected history in *Metaphysics* A.3–6, in which Socrates appears (see below), and thus presumably provides an elaboration on some *sophos*-lineage.

Such lineages would surely include the Seven *Sophoi* in particular, famed by the early fifth century for their maxims, the early crystallizations or kernels of universalizing ethical reflection. The presence of this pattern in *On Philosophy* is supported by our knowledge that there Aristotle discussed the origins of the maxim "Know yourself" (*gnôthi sauton*) found on the temple of Apollo at Delphi.³⁵ We also know that Aristotle wrote about the history of the temple, the particular Sage originating the *gnôthi sauton*, and the personnel responsible for putting it on the temple; while the source is unknown, it is hard to believe it would come from anywhere else.³⁶ Elsewhere in *On Philosophy*

34 This dialogue has been dated c. 350–347, i.e., just before Plato's death; see Chroust 1973, 2.13, 145–58.

35 Stob. 3.21.26, citing Porphyry. Interest in such questions dates at least to Critias in the fifth century.

36 Clem. Al. *Strom.* 1.14.60.3. Aristotle also collected *sophos* maxims, as did his research partners, and treated them as the sole relics of earlier civilizations extinguished in catastrophes (Synes. *Calvit. Enc.* 22.85c); it is harder to know whether he did this only in *On Philosophy*. After all, he sometimes began lecture-courses in meditation on a proverb

Aristotle looked further back in time and away in geography, writing about the Magi and Egyptian philosophies and the Orphic poems—and probably also about Zoroaster and Chaldaean views.³⁷ And we know that somewhere Aristotle spoke of followers of Parmenides and Melissus as “immobilists” and “non-physical thinkers”;³⁸ because this is not language from the *Metaphysics* or other extant lecture-works, if it does not come from the *Sophist*, it likely comes from this dialogue. Let us put this together, with the help of Diogenes Laertius’ opening section of his *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (DL 1.1–12), which may well recapitulate an Aristotle-inspired Peripatetic history of the discipline. Aristotle addresses the earliest traditions of philosophy, looking beyond Hellas and giving it a doxographical treatment familiar from Greek thought. This means, however, that he then had to posit a point of entrance of philosophy into Greece; probably he pointed to the Seven Sages, who left their mark and amplified their influence at Delphi.³⁹ We may also see the taxonomy of philosophers from Empedocles’ generation, a century after those Sages.⁴⁰

Socrates has to fit in somewhere. Two remarks about him attributed to Aristotle fit an *On Philosophy* provenance. According to Diogenes, Aristotle says that Socrates went to Delphi.⁴¹ According to Plutarch, Aristotle somewhere

(e.g., *Eth. Eud.* 1214a5–6); he could have done so, more explicitly and self-reflectively, in other lost dialogues.

37 DL 1.8, Philop. in *De An.* 186.14–16; Pliny *NH* 30.3, Plut. *Mor.* 370c. For Academic interest in the Magi, see Chroust 1973, 2.206–15; Horky 2009. According to DL 2.45, “Aristotle says that a Magus (μάγον τινά) came from Syria to Athens and foretold many things (τά ... ἄλλα καταγνώnai) about Socrates, in particular the violence of his coming death.” This might sound too anecdotal to fit into *On Philosophy*, and seems rather more like Phaedo’s *Zopyrus*, an early fourth century dialogue on physiognomy in which Zopyrus (possibly a Persian) diagnoses Socrates’ (poor) character (see Rossetti 1980 for evidence), and which joins Antisthenes’ contribution to the physiognomic genre. Diogenes Laertius (1.8) claims that Aristotle had a dialogue called *Magikos*; later scholars believed it to be inauthentic (cf. Rives 2004), but it might not be, or it might be an alternative name (or early version) of *On Philosophy* Book 1. That work, after all, was a dialogue, and may well have started with or included gossip. Cf. Deman 1942, 42.

38 Sext. *Emp. Phys.* 2.45–6.

39 Pl. *Prt.* 342a7–343b5 either suggested so treating the Sages or dramatizes the same tradition Aristotle uses.

40 If Aristotle wrote *On Philosophy* as a dialogue, we cannot say for sure in what order his characters would have discussed these matters. We would have a clue if Diogenes followed its approximate structure; perhaps someone started the conversation by asking about the ultimate origins of philosophy. But much else could have gotten it going, for example, questions about maxims.

41 DL 2.23. Taylor 1911, 65, thinks Diogenes’ claim is inferred from Plutarch’s statement (below), and that Aristotle’s claim is inferred from Pl. *Phdr.* 229e. One could similarly hold that Aristotle inferred the view from *Ap.* 21a9: though that dialogue does not mention

says that the Delphic *gnôthi sauton* set the keynote for Socrates' puzzlement and investigation into it (ἀπορίας καὶ ζητήσεως ταύτης ἀρχὴν ἐνέδωκεν).⁴² Either remark could come, directly or indirectly, from the discussion of Delphi in *On Philosophy*, concerning the way maxims unfold in the mind and practices of philosophers, or from a history of the origins of individuals' philosophizing in the same work, with a back reference to the Delphi discussion.

Wherever Socrates fits into the speeches of *On Philosophy*, if he does, Aristotle seems to present him as both a characteristic and peculiar philosopher. This can be seen if *Metaphysics A* provides a clue to *On Philosophy*. In the former, Aristotle says that philosophy, for his predecessors as much as for his contemporaries, begins in wonder (θαυμάζειν). Aristotle glosses wonder as puzzlement (διαπορήσαντες, ἀπορών), analyzes it as believing oneself to be ignorant (οἶεται ἀγνοεῖν), and presents its response as a "fleeing" (φεύγειν) from that ignorance and toward knowledge (982b13–22). Thus Socrates, in his life-directing experience of *aporia*, appears to recapitulate the discovery and response to *aporia* on the individual level that motivates the entire discipline. But as stereotypical, he might also be an outlier. Aristotle says that philosophy began with puzzles near at hand (τὰ πρόχειρα τῶν ἀπόρων)⁴³ and progressed incrementally (κατὰ μικρόν) to greater things (τῶν μειζόνων), including the status and movements (παθημάτων) of the moon, sun, and stars, and the origins of everything (τοῦ παντὸς γενέσεως). He does not specify the

the *gnôthi sauton*, Socrates says that Chaerephon received an oracle about him ("Does anyone surpass Socrates in wisdom?"—"No"), the understanding of which brought about his self-knowledge and his commitment to examining himself and others. But we should not expect Aristotle to have misread or misremembered the account in Plato's *Apology*, which famously lacks corroboration or specification, and he seems to remember the dialogue well elsewhere (*Rh.* 1419a8). Jaeger 1962, 130–1, reads these fragments as illustrating Socrates' moral innovation and introduction of Apolline religion to Athens; more diffusely, Dumoulin 1981, 97–103, 163. Taking the *gnôthi sauton* as the epitome of Apolline religion is common (cf. Burkert 1972, 148), though probably not justified (cf. Moore 2015, 22–30.). See Deman 1942, 42–8, for discussion of earlier literature.

42 Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1118c; attributed to a "Platonic work," i.e., a dialogue; see Moore 2015, 7–9, for interpretation of the line. Plutarch *could* be referring to Aristotle's *Sophist*, since Socrates' interest in self-knowledge might differentiate himself from sophists; he could also be referring to the *Protrepticus*, but as we will see below, that dialogue gives no sign of dealing with Socrates. Plutarch's vagueness about the source could mean that he is recalling the content of a dialogue from vague memory or (since he never cites *On Philosophy*) never read it and gets the fact from some compilation perhaps about self-knowledge; or it could mean that the precise work does not matter, or what matters is that it is from, say, an early or thought-to-be historically accurate work.

43 This is the reading of Primavesi 2012, 473, rather than the OCT's ἀτόπων; my argument does not depend on it.

near-at-hand oddities, but by later saying that “myth comprises wonders” (b19), probably he means the incongruities in and among myths that led to the systematization, rectification, and explanation found, for example, in Hesiod, Hecataeus, and allegorical interpreters of Homer. He presents such authors, after all, as forerunners to *philosophia* as he considers it, and they connect epic interpretation to cosmological and meteorological speculation. Yet neither mythological nor astronomical puzzles seem obviously to describe Socrates’ puzzling over self-knowledge. (In Plato’s *Theaetetus* [155b5–d3], by contrast, the wonder leading to philosophy comes, for instance, from puzzles about one’s relative properties; and Socrates speaks in this passage of *Theaetetus*’ competence at diagnosing “his own nature” [περὶ τῆς φύσεώς σου].) For Aristotle, Socrates appears to be inspired by something fundamentally different than what he says motivated philosophy, and so it would be hard to fit Socrates into his history of “incremental progress.” This opens the possibility that Aristotle considers Socrates uncannily adjunct to the history of philosophy.

Of course it is only a possibility. *On Philosophy* continues, in Book 2, as an analysis of Plato’s Forms, and throughout the *Metaphysics* Aristotle presents Socrates as a direct inspiration for Plato’s thinking of separable universals. Socrates’ interest in coming to know the definitions of virtue and other evaluative terms, conceivably a consequence of his interest in knowing himself and thus knowing precisely the supreme norms that govern his life (Aristotle does not discuss the matter), is part of that inspiration. Yet, as we will see, Aristotle does seem to present Socrates as a sort of special case in the history of philosophy—responsible more for bending the mainstream than for contributing in breadth to the conversation Aristotle has himself entered and advanced. That is no little responsibility, and is accompanied by his title role in “Socratic writings” and his authority as a sage. But he is no Pythagoras or Plato.

3 The *Protrepticus*

Aristotle wrote a dialogue celebrating philosophy in about 353 BCE.⁴⁴ It joined an illustrious genre of protreptic texts exhorting their readers to philosophy, from Antisthenes and Plato, and perhaps from all the first-generation Socratics and pedagogical rivals (e.g., Isocrates and Alcidas). But Aristotle’s differs from many we know in leaving Socrates out. Socrates appears not to have been a character, again because he set it contemporaneously, and among the many fragments of and references to the dialogue, he is never mentioned. Thus

44 For the date, Chroust 1973, 2.8–11.

Aristotle seems to have encouraged people to philosophy without appeal, even as corroboration, to the essential persuasive figure of the generation before. This shows something about Aristotle's projected audience: Socrates did not serve as *the* ideal for Prince Themison of Cyprus,⁴⁵ or for his Peripatetic readers and Athenian fans. It shows even more about Aristotle's vision of philosophy, one which appears not primarily to be Socrates' vision, at least as Aristotle understands it.⁴⁶

The *Protrepticus* depicts three major interlocutors: Isocrates; Heraclides, the Pythagorean Academic colleague of Aristotle's; and Aristotle himself.⁴⁷ Each argues for the importance or necessity of philosophy. Isocrates says that only the good condition of the soul makes one's life go well, and philosophy conduces to that condition; Heraclides claims that precise mathematical reasoning purifies our best part, which is our intelligence, and that philosophy just is that reasoning; and Aristotle shows that reflection on the best things in the world, including celestial and theological objects, is the best thing to do, and thus philosophy, which takes up those objects, is the best thing to do. Aristotle critiques both Isocrates' and Heraclides' positions, denying that philosophy has value only in the actions toward which it conduces or only in the mathematics-like precision of thought it instills. They all basically agree, however, that only philosophy makes human life livable, worth living, or most properly alive. This shared conclusion looks eminently Socratic. Yet the routes to that conclusion do not.

In fact, the Isocratean position seems to share the most with Socrates'. The sole source of value to people comes from education, which conduces to the healthy and good condition of a soul. Caring for one's belongings shows one's worthlessness. Indeed the more belongings and endowments one has, the more important intelligence is; without their thoughtful control, they may harm their owners.⁴⁸ This reiterates the familiar Socratic lessons from Plato's *Apology*, where Socrates identifies being good as the sole consideration for humans (28b8–c1), and the Platonic *Alcibiades*, where Socrates helps his beloved Alcibiades distinguish that which most needs his care and concern.

45 Aristotle dedicated and addressed the dialogue to him; for discussion, Chroust 1973, 2.119–25.

46 Again, Jaeger 1962, 55, 96–7, finds this unexceptional.

47 This is a fundamental but innovative argument of Hutchinson and Johnson (forthcoming); they spell out their methodology in Hutchinson and Johnson 2005. Collins 2015 argues that Classical protreptic works always included counter-protreptics, exhortations by the authors' opponents, in their narrative. For something of Aristotle's upshot, see Bobonich 2007, 163–8; Walker 2010.

48 *POxy.* 666 ~ Stob. 3.3.25.

In a later speech in the *Protrepticus*, Isocrates claims that goodness requires action and not knowledge alone. For example, astronomers may understand the cosmos but have no clue about human affairs, and thus fail to help themselves or others to live well.⁴⁹ This reminds us again of Socrates, especially in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (1.1.11–16, 4.7.4–7), but also in the autobiographical section of Plato's *Phaedo* (96a7–99e9). One external matter also links Isocrates and Socrates here. Aristotle seems to have written the *Protrepticus* in part as a response to Isocrates' *Antidosis* of 353 BCE, which itself criticized Academic philosophy.⁵⁰ Isocrates structured that speech on Plato's *Apology*.⁵¹ While he did not explicitly mention Socrates there, he recurs to themes of prosecution and defense of his philosophical mission.

Yet for all this, we might want to call Isocrates' view merely quasi-Socratic, and thus forego taking Isocrates as Aristotle's stand-in for the Socratic perspective. Socrates apparently holds that knowledge suffices to make an action good, a view that redounds, contra Isocrates, to knowledge's favor. Isocrates gives high value to experience, too; and while Socrates apparently esteems experts, Plato's *Apology* and *Gorgias*, among other dialogues, suggest that he denied to experience the status of ultimate value. More importantly, in the passages of Isocrates we have in the *Protrepticus*, Isocrates says nothing about self-examination or self-knowledge, critical conversation or the recognition of ignorance, or the seeking of definition and the nature of wisdom, among the other tropes of Socratism.⁵² Aristotle seems true to Isocratean writing in leaving these out, since Isocrates' oeuvre really does seem to underplay painful self-scrutiny. So, Aristotle cannot be taking a nuanced stance on Socrates in accepting in part and rejecting in part the Isocratean picture in the *Protrepticus*. Of course, it might seem *prima facie* implausible that Aristotle would treat Isocrates as a proxy for Socrates in the first place.

Heraclides has less of Socrates in his view. In his early speech he says that philosophy on his Pythagorean model develops an attention to mathematics, seeking purity, precision, and subtlety in demonstrations, with improvements in clarity, definitiveness, and fundamentality. This has personal benefits—inner harmony, intimacy with one's immaterial soul, relief from passions, cognizance of reality—as well as a broader influence on domestic life,

49 Iambl. *DCMS* 26.

50 For complete evidence, see Hutchinson and Johnson (forthcoming).

51 This is evident throughout the entire opening of the speech; see Mirhady and Too 2000, 202.

52 Halliwell 1997 and Morgan 2004 describe the un-Socratic aspects of Isocrates. Murphy 2013, 344, shows that Isocrates seems to disagree with the view that it is better to be wronged than to wrong (*Panath.* 117–18).

political organization, economic production, and military power. Intelligence has ultimate importance; philosophy strengthens it and shows the poverty of everything else.⁵³ Socrates similarly praises intelligence. But this might be as far as the connection goes. Unlike Heraclides, he stresses being good, and believes that a person becomes good through conversations about virtue rather than through the pursuit of mathematics alone.⁵⁴ (Since Heraclides is as much a grand-student of Socrates as Aristotle is, and as much a non-Athenian, it is worth noting that his having fallen far from the Socratic tree may ease entertaining a wide separation between Aristotle's and Socrates' thinking.)

The Aristotle character in the *Protrepticus* takes issue with both Isocrates and Heraclides. Aristotle argues that philosophy is pursued for its own sake, and is more valuable the more valuable its objects, such that astronomy and theology epitomize philosophy.⁵⁵ The celestial bodies and gods outstrip the objects of mathematics in value; in addition, mathematical precision provides the norm for only some worthwhile pursuits.⁵⁶ Rigorous philosophy is not as inaccessible, unpleasant, or pointless to achieve as Isocrates and others might assume: not only are causes more familiar, knowable, and worthy of knowing than their effects; but everybody enjoys *philosophia* and wants to spend all his time in it, neglecting everything else (ἀφεμένους τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάντων); and what precision the discipline does call for it has rapidly acquired, through its (Heraclides- and Pythagoras-approved) concentration on geometry, *logoi*, and the other departments of education.⁵⁷ Again, while the pleasure and efficacy of philosophy recall Socrates, the substance of the arguments for them do not. The high point of Aristotle's argument probably synthesizes the others. Thinking (τὸ φρόνειν) and recognizing (τὸ γιγνώσκειν) are choiceworthy in themselves for humans; and one cannot live as human without them. Good results in life require reasoning (λογισαμένοις) and being in accordance with wisdom (φρόνησις). Intelligence and observation, which have truth as their standards, are our highest functions. "He who thinks correctly is more alive, and he who most tells the truth lives the most."⁵⁸ This looks like a version of

53 Iambl. *DCMS* 22, *Pro.* 8.

54 The contrast between these is not strict; in the *Republic* the Socrates-character says that the pursuit of mathematics contributes to one's wellbeing (523a1–531d5), and as we will see below, the Pythagoreans apparently discussed the virtues by means of numbers.

55 Iambl. *DCMS* 23, *Pro.* 9.

56 Iambl. *DCMS* 27; cf. *Eth. Nic.* 1094b12–29.

57 Iambl. *DCMS* 26, *Pro.* 6. Presaging Aristotle's claim in *Metaph.* A.2 that philosophy progressed incrementally, here he says that philosophy has advanced "in small spurts" (ἐκ μικρῶν ἀφορμῶν).

58 Iambl. *Pro.* 7, cf. 11.

Socrates' motto at *Apology* 38a6, the unexamined life as unlivable by humans. But Aristotle mentions nothing of self-reflection, excision of false beliefs, or modesty in one's epistemic expectations. So, either he reinterprets the Socratic motto, or is doing something else.

What else he might be doing is drawing from the traditions Socrates himself drew on. It is plausible that philosophy had been distinctively concerned, from its start, with rational reflection as a source of wellbeing. Different threads of the tradition may have understood the nature of that rational reflection differently. Isocrates and Heraclides represent two thick threads; Socrates, not depicted in the dialogue, would represent a third. Aristotle suggests a fourth, one that innovates not on Socrates alone but on what he and Aristotle's two interlocutors in his dialogue share. This would again mean that Aristotle does not exactly exclude Socrates from the mainstream history of philosophy but treats him as basically adjunct to it, along a peculiar route that, while influential, does not represent the core. (Aristotle may have further reasons for ignoring Socrates; perhaps Socrates has little popular resonance for his imagined audience, or provides too risky an enticement into philosophy.)

Given the long-term significance of the *Protrepticus*, which Cicero's fragmentary *Hortensius* and Iamblichus' large-scale re-use reveal, the sublimated or indirect relevance of Socrates to the dialogue makes a difference to the history of philosophy.⁵⁹ Philosophy rewards in its contemplation of the most worthy objects of contemplation rather than in its remediation of practical error; in its becoming divine rather than in its appreciation of human impoverishment; in its getting to the bottom of things rather than in its clarification of the commonplace. Perhaps these are all complementary contrasts, opposite sides of a drachma; but Aristotle rather than Socrates placed the emphasis, for many years, on just one of them. To be sure, fourth-century debate about the role of philosophy in the good life would earn our pity as provincial or unimaginative if it went no further than the analysis of Socrates, and his absence from the three dialectical positions in a single dialogue does not thereby imply his irrelevance to such debates. What matters is that for Aristotle and many of his successors, Socrates does not uniquely represent philosophy in its core aspects.

59 The fragmentary remains of Cicero's dialogues show just one citation of Socrates (fr. 42 = Non. 337M), one that does not suggest thematic centrality.

4 The *Metaphysics*

Aristotle mentions Socrates three times across two books of the *Metaphysics*, each time for the same reason: to bridge the rise of the Platonic theory of the Ideas from the earlier Pythagorean development of number theory. So, while Aristotle attributes distinctive and independently reached philosophical discoveries to Socrates, he has no occasion to discuss them in their own terms, for their own reasons, or even to identify the influences on his views (Archelaus, for example, never being mentioned).⁶⁰ An explanation for this is that Socrates does not do metaphysics or physics, and so he fits into Aristotle's narrative scheme only negatively. Put more impersonally, whatever views might be ascribed to Socrates do not help dialectically with Aristotle's discussion of the fundamental principles of scientific or theological explanation.⁶¹

In A.6, having just addressed the Pythagoreans and their mathematical philosophy, as well as the other Italians, Aristotle turns to Plato. He says that Plato largely followed them (τὰ μὲν πολλὰ τοῦτοις ἀκολουθοῦσα, 987a30), but from youth he also accepted Cratylus' and the Heracliteans' view that what is perceptible is always flowing and thus cannot serve as objects of knowledge (a32–34). Aristotle continues unspooling that sentence after a colon, in a long dependent clause:

and Socrates involving himself (πραγματευόμενου) in ethical matters (περὶ ... τὰ ἠθικά) and not at all (οὐθέν) with the nature of the universe (περὶ ... τῆς ὅλης φύσεως), in these things however having sought the universal (τὸ καθόλου ζητούντος) and having been the first to establish reflection on definition (περὶ ὁρισμῶν ἐπιστήσαντος πρώτου τὴν διάνοιαν), Plato, accepting him (ἐκείνον ἀποδεξάμενος) for this, maintained that this [sc. establishing reflection] pertains to something other than perceptible things, for there can be no common statement about the perceptibles, given that they are always changing. Thus this [other] sort of beings he called "Ideas."

Metaph. A.6 987b1–8 (text Primavesi)

Aristotle then discusses the "Ideas."

This is the sole mention of Socrates in *Metaphysics* A, a book that serves not only to give genealogical confirmation to Aristotle's view that physical

60 For Archelaus as teacher of Socrates, see Cic. *Tusc.* 5.4.10 and DL 2.19 with Betegh 2013.

61 Fazzo 2013, 333–41, shows the parallels between the doxographical structure of these texts and that of Thales at *Metaph.* A 983b6–28.

explanation comes in exactly four types but also to tell a history of *sophia* abridged relative to those investigating nature and thus forming the backbone of the natural and theological philosophy he takes himself to practice. He formulates his remark about Socrates almost entirely as a genitive absolute clause, suggesting that it provides an important background condition for the key narrative being told. Socrates falls outside that absolute clause a little bit, appearing also as the direct object (ἐκείνον) of Plato's acceptance; Aristotle makes Socrates influential on Plato's views in the way that the Italians and Heracliteans are. But Aristotle limits that influence, attributing to Plato himself the inference from reflection on universal definitions to the nature of the objects of that reflection, namely as unchanging "Ideas" (it is not clear whether Aristotle sees the influence as properly ethical, too). So from this perspective, Socrates serves, like Cratylus (who is mentioned only once again, at 1010a12), as an important goad to Plato but not worth independent analysis.⁶² Aristotle makes such helpmeet thematic in *Metaphysics* 2 (Book α). Explaining the historical accumulation of theories and concepts in philosophy, Aristotle says that we must appreciate both those whose ideas we share and those who helped instigate those ideas, who helped the thinkers we really appreciate become who they were. In music we really appreciate Timotheus but must thank Phrynis for pushing him to the level he attained (993b12–18). Phrynis of Mytilene (c. 490–420 BCE), fitting into a history of music between Terpander and Timotheus, expanded the range of the lyre and made rhythmic innovations, challenging musical convention.⁶³

The grammar in the sentence in A.6 suggests a rather incidental Socrates. The content, by contrast, suggests a crucial one. Socrates is said to have inaugurated close attention to definitions.⁶⁴ And though he ignored the whole *qua* "universe" (ὅλης), he cared deeply for the whole *qua* "universal" (καθόλου), which (maybe) attracted Plato and influenced his tremendous innovation.⁶⁵

62 Aristotle's evidence for Cratylus' influence is uncertain; his brevity about it is intriguing. Plato was treated as a student of Cratylus at DL 3.6; Anon. *Proleg.* 4.4–7; Olymp. *Vit. Pl.* 192–3.

63 See Ar. *Nub.* 971, where "Just Speech" says that Phrynis negatively inspired the youth—apparently as a parallel to Socrates; Pherecrates *Chiron* fr. 155; Plut. *Mus.* 6 and *Agis* 10.4. He was the first winner at Pericles' new Panathenaic music festivals. In general, see Riemschneider 1941.

64 Aristotle never says that he dealt with definitions well or precisely; for speculation about the point of his remark, see Grote 1880, 141; Taylor 1933, 153 n. 2.

65 Chroust 1952, 332, construes this as there having "been a sacred tradition within the Early Academy to consider Socrates as the real originator of this doctrine [i.e., of the Ideas], an assumption which also receives much support in Plato's early dialogues." I do not think this follows; cf. Grote 1880, 551–7.

And then he “involved himself” or “dealt with” “ethical matters” (τὰ ἠθικά), the verb *πραγματεύεσθαι* implying a definite dedication and thoroughness though no particular method.⁶⁶ Aristotle does not say that Socrates initiated doing so,⁶⁷ but of nobody else does Aristotle mention a concern for *ta êthika*, which implies that Aristotle thinks (but cannot confirm?) that he did.⁶⁸ The complete lack of interest in “the nature of the universal,” which seems not only a technical reference to the study of the whole of the world but also a genre of questions, a totalizing investigation, sets Socrates starkly apart from all those previously mentioned. Aristotle does not say whether this also means epistemology and metaphysics, but since he never associates Socrates with those studies elsewhere, he may.⁶⁹ In sum, then, Socrates brought to philosophy’s attention the centrality of definitions and universals, a wholehearted commitment to ethics, and the decision to reject the charms of physics (for an unstated reason—Aristotle does not describe the Socratic disaffection with Anaxagoras narrated in Plato’s *Phaedo*, or the disdain for physical explanation paraphrased in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*, or the turn inward demanded by obedience to the Delphic *gnôthi sauton*, at *Phdr.* 229e). We thus have some tension. Socrates matters to Aristotle’s story as squire to one of its heroes, Plato. But Aristotle admits that Socrates was as important as the Italians and Heracliteans to the development of philosophy. So, while not Timotheus, he deserves our deep appreciation, as Phrynis does.⁷⁰

A second mention of Socrates in the *Metaphysics*, at M.9, adds little to A.6. In the last paragraph of this section, Aristotle brings up the mathematical philosophers, to defer discussion of them, and the partisans of the Ideas, about which he will say a bit. He notes that they run into a puzzle: their Ideas are universals, separable, and particulars all at once. They believe that like things that are perceptible (which always change), their universal Ideas are substances, but that the two substances differ (1086a29–b2). Aristotle continues:

66 E.g., in *Pl. Ap.* 22b4, of poets “attending to” or “working up” their poems, and *Prm.* 129e7, of Zeno’s arguments; in Aristotle, *Eth. Eud.* 1215a30, *Metaph.* A.8 989b33, E.1 1025b17, *Hist. an.* 513a9, *Phys.* 193b31, etc.

67 *DL* 5.8 gives some credit to Archelaus of Athens, a follower of Anaxagoras.

68 For Socratic-era ethical reflection, see Wolfsdorf (forthcoming).

69 Cf. Lacey 1971, 48; see Prior 2013, 85–7, for the metaphysical commitments Aristotle attributes to him.

70 Grote 1880, 436–45, argues for the central influence to Aristotle’s core project of Socrates’ turn to everyday language and concerns and his effective deployment of what became the principle of non-contradiction. But Aristotle does not explicitly (or consciously?) present his project in such Socratic terms.

And this, as we said in our earlier discussion [M.4, discussed below], Socrates caused to come about (ἐκίνησε) on account of his definitions (διὰ τοὺς ὁρισμούς), though he did not separate them from each particular: and he had the right idea (ὀρθῶς ἐνόησεν) in not so separating. The consequences make this clear: without a universal there can be no acquisition of knowledge (ἐπιστήμην λαβεῖν) ...

Metaph. M.9 1086b2–5

Here Aristotle attributes to Socrates (referring to an earlier passage at M.4, studied below) almost the “efficient” cause of the Academic idea of the Ideas, nudging it into place with his attention to definitions. Definitions are universals, and universals subtend knowledge. The Academics assumed that definitions refer to universals as things separated from the (unknowable) things to which our descriptions of perceptibles refer. Socrates did not make this assumption. Aristotle does not make immediately clear whether he believes that Socrates actively avoided this assumption, or instead that he did not even think about it. Aristotle does presume that Socrates pursued definitions as universals as part of his search for knowledge. This means that Aristotle thinks that Socrates pursued knowledge. Aristotle also says that Socrates “thought correctly” in not “separating,” that is, in not giving a distinct numerical or locational reality to the referents of those universals. But Aristotle does not provide Socrates’ argument or reasoning for not so separating. Thus we might suspect Aristotle of being wry, saying that Socrates “thought correctly” only in not thinking to do it at all, basically being innocent of the various metaphysical consequences of his linguistic or logical practice.⁷¹ That Aristotle takes Socrates as innocent might be suggested by the non-intellectual term, “caused to come about” (ἐκίνησε) that he uses for Socrates’ influence.⁷²

The third reference to Socrates comes earlier in Book M, in chapter 4, and by contrast adds considerable detail to what we read at A.6. As in the two other cases, Aristotle summarizes earlier remarks about mathematical philosophy and then turns to the promulgators of the Ideas. Those people, he says (now not mentioning Cratylus), were convinced by the Heraclitean argument that perceptibles always change, and so knowledge and wisdom, should they exist,

71 Taylor 1933, 161–2, thinks Aristotle is wrong to think that Socrates did not invent Forms; by contrast, an author like Taylor 2000, 40–1, relies heavily on Aristotle’s testimony.

72 Gili 2013, esp. 323–4, takes Aristotle to be criticizing Socrates’ dialectical simplicity, his having “paid no attention to the epistemological basis of his search for definition: how is it possible that a definition is true for everybody and at all times?,” and his believing that dialectic cannot find or defend the truth.

would require the existence of something else. Once again Aristotle interjects Socrates:

And Socrates involving himself in ethical virtue (περὶ τὰς ἠθικὰς ἀρετὰς πραγματευομένου) and having been the first to have sought universal definition (ὀριζέσθαι καθόλου ζητούντος πρώτου) in that realm (περὶ τούτων)—for among the physicists Democritus fixed himself to this, though only a little (ἐπὶ μικρόν ... μόνον), and defined, after a fashion (ὥρισató πως), the hot and the cold; and the Pythagoreans had earlier dealt with a few such things, the statements of which they affixed to numbers, for example what is the opportune, or justice, or marriage—and he [Socrates] was justified (εὐλόγως) in having sought the “what is it?”: for he sought accountings (συλλογίζεσθαι), and the starting point (ἀρχή) of accountings is the “what is it?”—there was not yet a robust dialectic that could investigate opposites without the “what is it?” and whether the same knowledge concerns opposites—given that one might fairly attribute two things to Socrates, inductive arguments (τούς τ’ ἐπακτικὸς λόγους) and universal definition (τὸ ὀριζεσθαι καθόλου), and both concern the starting point of knowledge (περὶ ἀρχὴν ἐπιστήμης). But Socrates made neither the universal nor the definitions separable, whereas the others (οἱ δ) did separate them, and they called these sorts of things Ideas.⁷³

Metaph. M.4 1078b17–34

The start and finish of this passage matches the A.6 passage closely (and also M.9), as though Aristotle simply expanded it and removed the specific references to Plato. He did so in at least seven ways.

(i) Here he refers to “ethical virtue” (τὰς ἠθικὰς ἀρετὰς) rather than “ethics” (τὰ ἠθικά). This specifies Socrates’ target of inquiry as the virtues, and since one might do little with them besides define them, Aristotle may be implying that Socrates ignored the many other available ethical questions, for example those found in his ethical treatises. There Aristotle addresses the nature of pleasure, the function of human nature, the taxonomy of the intellectual virtues, details about friendship, and, of course, much else. As we see here but especially elsewhere, Aristotle has Socrates believe that with knowledge of (the definition of) a virtue, one is thereby virtuous, and since virtue is our supreme goal,

73 Aristotle does not specify this group of “others” relevantly linked with Socrates; Taylor 1911, 69–88, suggests the ones Plato calls “friends of the forms” (*Soph.* 248a4–5), perhaps half-Parmenidean Megarians.

(definitional) knowledge of the virtues is our supreme object of inquiry. Thus Socrates' narrow investigative ambit.

(ii) Aristotle consolidates the previously separate language of "definition" (ὁρισμῶν) and "universal" (τὸ καθόλου) into the noun-phrase "universal definition" (ὁρίζεσθαι καθόλου). This makes clear that Socrates did not pursue definitions and universals as independent projects: a good definition results in a universal, as the Platonic dialogues reveal. Obvious as this may sound, it suggests that Aristotle does not regard Socrates as asking definitional questions for pragmatic reasons (or does not regard him doing so as significant), for example as the best way to induce *aporia* and thereby to cause his interlocutors to recognize their ignorance of that about which they take themselves to be most expert. This is despite the fact that Aristotle acknowledges that Socrates asked questions but did not answer them, that he avoided appearing dogmatic, and that he had a proclivity toward irony.⁷⁴

(iii) Aristotle gives Socrates qualified historical priority in his attention to definitions. Socrates' contemporary Democritus did some physical definition, but, unlike Socrates, his doing so did not characterize his practice and he had less than complete success in it (as the *πῶς* suggests).⁷⁵ The Pythagoreans defined idiosyncratically, assigning numbers rather than elucidating statements, and applied themselves to a grab-bag of topics.⁷⁶ Aristotle never says that Socrates achieved reliability in his definitions, and later in this paragraph he judges Socrates' dialectical method as lacking in certain powers; for all that, however, he does not call Socrates a bad or mistaken or dubious inquirer. But he elsewhere specifies that "it was during the time of Socrates" that people both took up the definitional method and they gave up physical pursuits (*Part. an.* 642a24–31)—Aristotle presumably means the Sophists, who definitely defined ethical terms—and this suggests that he perhaps judges Socrates simply a symptom of his time.

(iv) Socrates defined terms by means of "what is it?" questions. This we see from a subset of Platonic dialogues,⁷⁷ though in other dialogues Plato presents

74 *Soph. el.* 183b8, *Rh.* 1398b29–31, *Eth. Nic.* 1127b26.

75 *Part. an.* 642a24–31: Democritus almost gave definitions of essences, but only as incidental to his investigations into physics (cf. *Phys.* 2.2 194a20–21).

76 Cf. Favorinus (DL 8.48): Pythagoras "used definitions throughout the substance of mathematics (ἔργοις χρῆσασθαι διὰ τῆς μαθηματικῆς ὕλης), which Socrates and those around him improved, and then again with Aristotle.

77 Approximately a third of them: *Euthyphro* ("reverence"), *Theaetetus* ("knowledge"), *Sophist* ("the sophist"), *Statesman* ("the statesman"), *Laches* ("courage"), *Lysis* ("friendship"), *Greater Hippias* ("beauty"), *Republic* ("justice"); also parts of *Gorgias* ("rhetoric") and *Meno* ("virtue"), and dialogues of dubious authenticity, including *Rival Lovers* ("philosophy") and *Hipparchus* ("greed").

Socrates—I assume not unrealistically—as asking other sorts of questions, including whether virtue is teachable or is unified, whether one ought to do philosophy, what makes writing good, why justice ought always to be pursued, and so forth. Aristotle does not explicitly deny that, so he must be identifying the kind of question he takes as characteristic or philosophically momentous. He focuses on the latter point, linking definitions directly to knowledge. Socrates' other questions yield determinate answers only with a definition (as Socrates says in *Meno* 86c5–e2, *Prt.* 361c6), and so perhaps they ought to come only subsequent to definition in the quest for understanding. Whatever Socrates' reasons for asking these subsidiary questions, and Plato's reasons for organizing long dialogues around their pursuit, Aristotle sees only the definitional ones as relevant to his epistemological purposes.

(v) Socrates sought “accountings” (συλλογίζεσθαι). I take this as Aristotle's most telling remark. The term, literally “reasoning with,” seems to mean, in the practical, human, ethical context into which Aristotle has set Socrates and would see him as a character in Plato's dialogues, “giving reasons for one's actions,”⁷⁸ despite the technical form translators and commentators often give to it,⁷⁹ and is Aristotle's general term for “argument” as a topic of study in the *Topics* and *Sophistical Refutations*; at 183b1–3, he says that prior to him there has been no investigation into it. Given the way Aristotle presents Socrates' sole (philosophical) interest, as dealing with ethical virtue, he must mean that Socrates believes that people act virtuously on the basis of their knowledge of the universal definitions of those virtues. “Accountings” must be the courses of reasoning from that knowledge to a specific decision. Subsumption of actions to principles seems a universal practice; but in saying so unqualifiedly that Socrates “sought accountings,” Aristotle implies a certain novelty to it. Aristotle seems in fact to be suggesting that Socrates stands out from all predecessors and contemporaries for having sought those accountings, for having endeavored that people act on the basis of reasons that they can make explicit and thus show to themselves and others to *be* reasons. If so, Aristotle makes Socrates essential in the development of people's orientation to their own lives, where they are to take themselves fundamentally as rational agents, whatever Socrates' actual argumentative or theoretical contributions happen to be.

78 In Plato, the term often means inferring to a conclusion from evidence, including prior agreements (*Chrm.* 160d8, *Grg.* 479c5, 498e10, *Resp.* 516b9, 531d2, *Phlb.* 41c9), often specifically about how best to live (*Resp.* 365a8, 618d6).

79 Fine 1993: “deductive arguments”; Reeve 2016: “deduce”; Laks and Most 2016, 8.351: “argue deductively”; Chroust 1952, 328 and 336: “arrive at syllogisms,” but at 337: “reason from opinions” and “occupy oneself with dialectical inquiries”; Ross 1924: “syllogize.”

(vi) Aristotle gives Socrates historical priority in inductive argument (τούς τ' ἐπακτικούς λόγους) as well as in universal definition—and recognizes either that others have attributed alternative discoveries to him or that this double attribution might sound rather bold. Inductive argument must refer to the giving of numerous instances in support of a universal claim.⁸⁰ Universal definition precedes deduction. Accordingly, Aristotle has crowned Socrates inaugurator of the bulk of science—the upward (inductive) and downward (deductive) movements of inference.⁸¹ This seems deeply important, except that Aristotle gives it little fanfare, and we do not see Aristotle discussing Socrates all over the *Analytics* and the *Topics*. Perhaps Socrates did not actually *invent* induction, the use of examples and the appeal to fact; he at most recognized its use or deployed it systematically or concentratedly.⁸² But the bigger explanation is probably that Aristotle does not care as much about methodological innovations or rhetorical efficacy as he does about fruitful or true substantive claims, for example about natural explanation itself. If Socrates really did focus on *questions*, including their best structure and sequence (τάττειν καὶ ἐρωτηματίζειν, *Top.* 155b8), a task which Aristotle attributes to the dialectician rather than the philosopher, then whatever salutary effects he might have had on his interlocutors (and on himself), he would not have focused on the answers, and yet it is the answers that Aristotle makes the true currency of philosophical development. Aristotle elsewhere in the *Metaphysics* (Γ.2) distinguishes strictly between the philosophical life of knowledge and the dialectical life of critique; this seems to force Socrates into the (questioning half of) the role of dialectician, not philosopher.

(vii) Both of Socrates' innovations aim at knowledge. Once again, Aristotle makes no reference to the possibility that Socrates intended any pragmatic or paideutic effects—that his methods of argumentation sought cognitive, ethical, or even emotional transformation. Perhaps these effects, prerequisites for learning in the first place, were Socrates' strong suit. It would not matter, from Aristotle's picture of philosophy as the accumulation of knowledge or plausible beliefs about fundamental matters. Aristotle traverses the ridgeline rather than climbs the ascent.

80 See Vlastos 1991, 267–9. Aristotle elsewhere exemplifies inductive argument through a case of analogical reasoning about political selection by lot that he treats as characteristic of τὰ Σωκρατικά (*Rh.* 1393b3–8), which seems to refer as much to Socratic writings as to Socratic personages.

81 Cf. Chroust 1952, 329, calling Socrates' innovations “conceptualism” and “scientific definition.”

82 Taylor 1911, 72–80; Lacey 1971, 47–8; Ausland 2012, 224–30, 244–50: “not inductive arguments *per se*, but a technically competent handling of such arguments” (229).

In summary, Socrates plays a minor role in the *Metaphysics*, and this need represent no undue bias on Aristotle's part. This does not mean, however, that Socrates plays only a minor role in the history of the philosophy that the *Metaphysics* takes up. Socrates seems to have spent much of his life in the heavy-duty efforts preparatory for or tangential to the accumulation, justification, or dissemination of knowledge, even if Aristotle believes that knowledge is the goal of his pertinent activity. Socrates may have had his greatest discoveries in the process rather than the product of philosophy, and his signal impact may have been in teaching Plato about universals. Aristotle's treatment of Socrates may seem rather severe; but perhaps Socrates would agree with the modesty of epistemological success that Aristotle attributes to him.

5 Three Ethical Works

Not surprisingly given Aristotle's claim that Socrates focused on ethics, the bulk of his references to Socrates come in his ethical works. If we add the *Magna Moralia*, as (for example) student notes on a set of Aristotle's lectures,⁸³ to the *Eudemian* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, we get about fifteen references. From one perspective, Socrates is incidental to the philosophical debates about ethics contemporaneous with Aristotle; from another, however, he has set the tasks for any future ethical theorist.

In eleven of these references (all inferable from the *Protagoras*), Aristotle is disagreeing with just three related Socratic views: that virtue is knowledge; that courage in particular is knowledge of what is fearful; and that nobody acts against what he knows to be best (i.e., nobody is incontinent). Indeed, the second and third may simply gloss the first, implying that Aristotle gives Socrates a single thesis ("virtue is knowledge"), just as he gives Thales a single thesis ("water is the principle"). The other four references to Socrates make one-off observations, concerning Socrates' judgment about virtue's attainability,⁸⁴ his colorful illustration of our casting off what's useless,⁸⁵ a

83 On the question of authenticity, see Cooper 1973.

84 *MM* 1.9 1187a7: Aristotle gives Socrates' reason for thinking virtue is not universally attainable (everybody prefers justice but not everybody is just) and denies this with an argument from the cogency of coercive laws familiar from Protagoras in the *Protagoras* and from habits of blame.

85 *Eth. Eud.* 1235a39: explaining some people's view that only the useful is a friend, Aristotle says that we cast off the useless, and cites "Socrates the Elder"'s claim that that's what we do with spittle, hair, and fingernails (cf. *Xen. Mem.* 1.2.53–54).

counterfactual relationship between knowledge and fortune,⁸⁶ and Aristotle's example of Socrates as someone who while not candid was still noble in his self-deprecation.⁸⁷ This might seem to treat Socrates as small beer, for someone who devoted his life to ethical reflection and spawned the Socratic movement, of which Aristotle is a direct beneficiary. More poignantly, Aristotle's substantive remarks are almost entirely negative, and hardly ever strive to give Socrates a charitable or elaborated word. This supports the view that Aristotle doubted the centrality or even relevance of Socrates to ongoing philosophical conversations. From another perspective, however, Socrates still beats all comers in number of times directly named.⁸⁸ When he does show up, it is in structurally significant spots, often generating the central puzzles that Aristotle spends much of those books working through, or providing the sole example of an opposing view. This supports the contrasting view that, according to Aristotle, Socrates virtually single-handedly made ethics a core topic of philosophical reflection.⁸⁹

The Janus-faced nature of Aristotle's Socratic reception shows up most clearly in the proems to the three works. The proem to the *Magna Moralia* starts, like many of Aristotle's other (non-ethical) works, with a disciplinary genealogy.⁹⁰ He says that we ought to know what our predecessors said—in

86 *Eth. Eud.* 1247b15: perhaps drawing from the *Euthydemus* (or the influences on that dialogue).

87 *Eth. Nic.* 1127b26: Socrates especially self-deprecated about qualities that would otherwise bring reputation (cf. *Ap.* 37e, *Grg.* 489e, *Resp.* 1.337a). Aristotle's treatment of *eirōneia* as peculiarly Socratic had uneven success; Theophrastus' *Characters* (ΕΙΡΩΝΕΙΑΣ Α') does not take up Socratic *eirōneia* but Ariston of Ceos' similar work (Phld. Περὶ Κακῶν cols. 22–3) does.

88 In *Magna Moralia*, which discusses Socrates six times, no other philosopher comes close: Empedocles twice, though passingly (in witty examples about concord [1212a16] and like being drawn to like [1208b12]); Pythagoras or Pythagoreans twice (view of soul in proem, and on reciprocity [1194a30]); Heraclitus once (for the epistemic view that belief is as strong as knowledge [1201b8]). The same ratios hold for the two other *Ethics*.

89 Burger 2008 presents a version of this argument, as does Tessitore 1988, who concludes that "Aristotle directs his readers to an appreciation for the seriousness of Socratic inquiry, however outlandish and galling it might initially appear" (22)—Tessitore takes it that in writing for a popular audience of "gentlemen" (i.e., not sympathetic historians of philosophy), Aristotle needs to confront and remediate Socrates' uncomfortable radicality (on the not fully substantiated assumption that mid- or late fourth century auditors cared much about Socrates). Giannantoni 1990 (cf. 1993, 581–4) observes that all the fundamental theses of Aristotle's ethical work seem to make reference to Socrates' ethical ideas.

90 Mansfeld 2008 thinks that Aristotle did not write the proem, citing several considerations (340–1) that I judge not decisive, and suggests that a disciple wrote it having read other Aristotelian material.

this case, about virtue—though he does not give his reasons here for thinking that we should have this background knowledge. Pythagoras attempted to speak of virtue, but did so by referring its instances inappropriately to numbers (as we saw above). Then came Socrates,

who spoke better and more fully about them, but even he did so incorrectly, in making virtues sciences (ἐπιστήμας)—this cannot be the case for them; for the sciences have, for each of them, a rational account (πάσι μετὰ λόγου), which comes to be in the rational (διανοητικῷ) part of the soul; thus according to him all the virtues come about in the rational part of the soul; thus making virtues sciences leads to denying the irrational (ἄλογον) part of the soul, and making them thus denies both passion and character (πάθος καὶ ἦθος). For this reason he was incorrect to deal with the virtues in this way.

MM 1182a15

Then came Plato, who acknowledged the soul's irrational part, and thereby correctly located the virtues, but then wrongly assimilated talk of virtue to talk of reality. And with those few sentences, Aristotle says that we must decide now what we ourselves ought to say. He hits three big names—Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato—and finds an improving engagement with virtue. Pythagoras at least had the right scope, if a totally mistaken mode of explanation; Socrates appealed to the right sort of explanation, but with an incomplete picture of human nature; and Plato had the right picture of human nature but got lost in the logical relations between virtues and their ends. Socrates has a crucial role overall, and especially for explanatory matters, though not for achieving accuracy or technical precision (and not for creating ethical inquiry *ex nihilo*). Twice later in the *Magna Moralia* Aristotle describes Socrates' mistake in believing that virtues amount to knowledge alone. Whereas here Aristotle puts the mistake in terms of parts of the soul, a page later he puts it in terms of Socrates' argument from teleological parsimony: Socrates is wrong to make the virtues sciences while also believing that nothing is in vain. For on Socrates' view, having the science, say, of justice would thereby make one just, in which case having the virtue in addition would be in vain; if virtues are not in vain, then they must contribute (and thus amount to) something beyond sciences (1183b9–18). Aristotle's remarks about Socrates, which are the only ones in this span of argument that name a specific person, cap his introductory remarks concerning the good at which all practices, etc., aim, and in particular his criticism of the explanatory relevance of an Idea of the good. This means that here he sees Socrates as having a view distinct from that of the Academic

Idea-theorists but one that somehow relates importantly to it. The other time Aristotle brings up Socrates' mistake about virtue in *Magna Moralia* is one during which he has been focusing on the natural impulse with which reason and choice may constitute complete virtue. Socrates ignored that natural impulse. Aristotle's contemporaries get it better, he says, but still not quite right. Again Aristotle has picked out only Socrates for naming, and starts his important analysis of virtue with him, as though, despite his harsh judgment, Aristotle finds Socrates the instigator of all the on-point thinking about this.⁹¹

The proem to the *Eudemian Ethics* yields a similar story. Early in it, Aristotle has a pair of references to Anaxagoras on the nature of happiness (1215b6, 1216a11),⁹² but then when he asks his first fundamental question, about the nature of virtue and *phronêsis* and their relations, he gives only one example of a view, that of "Socrates the elder," in a long paragraph in explication and critique (1216b4–26); he then moves on to two major methodological points before ending these prefatory remarks. What he says here about Socrates is a consolidation of what we saw in *Magna Moralia*. Socrates took knowledge of virtue to be our goal, and thus he investigated the various parts of virtue; this was reasonable on his belief that virtues are kinds of knowledge, such that once one knows a virtue one is virtuous, as when one knows geometry or building one becomes a geometer or builder. He thus inquired into virtue rather than into how to acquire it (Aristotle does not consider whether Socrates *showed* how to acquire it). In doing so, according to Aristotle, Socrates seems to have overgeneralized from the theoretical sciences, such as astronomy, physics, or geometry, where knowing is all there is to them; but practical sciences, including political science, the department of ethical inquiry, have goals other than knowledge of them.⁹³ Aristotle concludes his argument against Socrates' view with the concession that knowing a noble thing (such as virtue) is no doubt noble, but that knowing its source is even better; obviously we are to *be* virtuous. (Aristotle makes a similarly wry criticism at *Eth. Nic.* 1105b12–18: disregarding the importance of action, many people think they are philosophizing and becoming serious simply by "fleeing into talk," which is as silly as a sick patient simply listening to the doctor rather than changing his habits.) After criticizing Socrates, Aristotle in the *Eudemian Ethics* takes an abstract turn toward methodological principles: we should use people's perceptions as evidence for our arguments; and only certain reasons count as philosophically relevant reasons (1216b26–1217a18). Maybe Socrates' errors

91 See also *Eth. Eud.* 1144b17–30, where again Socrates is the sole example.

92 Cf. *Iambl. Pro.* 9.

93 Cf. *Pl. Chrm.* 165c5–166c2.

have occasioned these remarks. Elsewhere Aristotle does take Socrates to task for denying the existence of *akrasia* despite our perceiving it to exist (*MM* 1200b25–32), and perhaps Aristotle thinks that Socrates' "virtue = knowledge" thesis denies our perception that definitional insight does not always yield praiseworthy behavior.⁹⁴ But Aristotle never seems to impugn Socrates for bringing in sophistic or eristic arguments, which tend to be arid and forego observation of relevant phenomena, and so possibly these final methodological criticisms aim only to clarify matters before providing a constructive account. In any case, Socrates is the only philosopher to get a true discussion in this proem. Despite its negative character and absence of attempt to twist it into something true, Aristotle seems to be vaunting Socrates to a—or the—leading position in the history of philosophizing about virtue.

As I said above, Aristotle deals carefully with only two other Socratic positions, both also versions of the supremacy of knowledge. Aristotle gives courage pride of explanatory place in his theory of the virtues. In all three ethical works, he says that Socrates wrongly asserted that courage was knowledge.⁹⁵ While knowing how prepared you are to deal with something fearful looks like courage (what Socrates must have meant by "knowing what is fearful" [*Prt.* 360d], Aristotle says), it is actually prudence, attacking when it is safe and retreating when it is not (*Eth. Eud.* 1230a7). Expositionally more important is Aristotle's use of Socrates in his elucidation of incontinence. In *Magna Moralia*, he says that they must start by going through the paradoxes and problems. The first one he mentions is Socrates' outright rejection and denial of incontinence. He gives some of Socrates' reasoning: nobody would choose what was bad if he knew it to be bad; but incontinence involves so choosing. Aristotle says that this reasoning is incorrect, because it is evident that there are incontinent men, as we noted above (*MM* 1200b25–32). In one way this does not take Socrates' view seriously, for it uncharitably assumes his blindness to the phenomena; but in another way, in starting with it, it does.

In a common book of the *Eudemian* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle does something related. He again starts with Socrates' rejection of incontinence on the grounds that knowledge hardly seems something to be mastered and dragged around: this goes against everybody's clearest perceptions. And again this introduces many pages of (challenging) discussion of incontinence (1145b30–1152a35). Aristotle eventually admits to agreeing with Socrates: if a person has "knowledge strictly speaking" (*χρηδως*) she will not be incontinent,

94 See further Mansfeld 2011.

95 *MM* 1190b29, *Eth. Eud.* 1229a15–16, *Eth. Nic.* 116b3–5. On the question of their consistency, see Laks and Most 2016, 8.385.

and will not have her knowledge dragged about by emotion: the knowledge consistent with incontinence is “perceptual knowledge” (1147b14–17).⁹⁶ Elsewhere in the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle concludes an argument by assenting to the Socratic notion (τὸ Σωκρατικόν) that nothing can overwhelm *phronêsis*, as long as we recognize that it differs from knowledge (*epistêmê*) (EE 1246b35).

Socrates then matters in a serious way to ethical reflection. He turned philosophy’s focus to virtue in a productive way, and did so in particular by relating virtue to knowledge—for reasons on which Aristotle does not here speculate. Aristotle takes up Socrates’ idea, putting *phronêsis* at the heart of virtue, while judging Socrates’ innovation an overcorrection, one that ignores the ineluctable role of the bodily and irrational. The most pressing debates by the time of Aristotle, then, are not those Socrates belongs to but those that can thank Socrates for their existence, namely, about the precise roles that knowledge plays in the ethical life. Aristotle of course also develops a theory of pleasure and a taxonomy of intellectual virtues that he does not find in Socrates’ thinking.

We might wonder whether Aristotle should have characterized Socrates’ thinking in a more subtle and charitable way. It seems that he could all along have said that Socrates correctly called virtue a kind of cognition, not a mere endowment of aristocratic upbringing or passively absorbed habit, but that he neglected to distinguish *phronêsis* from *epistêmê* adequately. Aristotle’s curtness might be deserved, however, if he believed that Socrates’ thinking did lack subtlety and did not deserve charity—perhaps Socrates was dogmatic about virtue’s being an *epistêmê*—or if he believed he had to deal with his predecessors as briefly and contrastingly as possible, to allow his spending his time in critical conversation with his (unnamed) contemporaries. But Aristotle may have been wrong to forego critical conversation with Socrates; he may have ignored the insight of the many first-generation authors of Socratic writings, who through close reconstruction and challenge of Socrates’ ideas could make a career for themselves. Whichever it is, however, Aristotle reveals the Phrynic (“without whom we would not have Timotheus”) importance he grants to Socrates.

96 Marcinkowska-Rosół 2004 discusses the Aristotelian side of this argument.

6 Conclusion

W.K.C. Guthrie gives excellent expression to Aristotle's uptake of Socrates. In yet another example of Aristotle's clarity of vision, he sums up Socrates' contributions "in a few crisp sentences," even if in his own vocabulary, enough that he believed Socrates to have "had great influence in turning the whole current of philosophy" toward ethics. "Aristotle had no personal interest in Socrates," and had "no emotional involvement," and yet in his bemoaning the mathematical turn in philosophy of his day, he "turned with relief to the more Socratic topics of ethics and immortality."⁹⁷ And yet there is more that we can say.

Aristotle's muted respect for Socrates may seem dispositional, a result of the later thinker's commitment to abstract knowledge-generation over personal therapy. Not being from Athens, born too long after the execution of 399, and unmoved by the pedagogical anxieties of the post-Periclean age, maybe he have found the interpersonal, therapeutic, and liberatory mode of philosophy unconvincing, even unserious. Maybe. We lack any hard evidence for such insensitivity to the call to philosophy that Socrates heard. We cannot accuse Aristotle of avoiding the thought that philosophy is a way of life; he advocates a pursuit of wisdom as at the center of becoming fully human. Nor can we accuse Aristotle of ignoring the communal aspect of philosophy, as a dialectical (and endoxic) enterprise with others; indeed he seems to think that Socrates went too far in the direction of solipsism, ignoring the experiences of others. And Aristotle's zeal for political and ethical analysis in the interest of civic and personal improvement removes yet another potential difference between the two.

So maybe Aristotle felt some intellectual boundary between himself and Socrates, a sense by the Stagirite that his Athenian forebear simply lacked his enormous analytic discipline, comprehensive scope, and explosive creativity backed by two centuries of philosophizing, even if he could accept that Socrates excelled in conversational mastery, iconoclastic boldness, and charismatic appeal. This would not require that Aristotle thought himself obviously the better thinker or that we believe him to be, but it would legitimate Aristotle's

97 Guthrie 1971, 35–9; cf. Long 2011, 368. Natali 2013, 63–7, observes that Aristotle shared Socrates' refusal of tuition, but did so for his own reason: he was rich, and needed to make good use of his leisure. He simply cared more for research than for teaching, persuasion, witnessing, proselytizing, and converting, the Socratic sides of life. He also notices a shared belief in philosophy as a *bios*, but eventually two quite different *bioi*. Finally, he notes that while Aristotle writes his treatises with a dialectical structure, deploying the opinions of experts, he grants personal interaction only secondary importance.

decision in the historiography of philosophy—the norms of which he helped define—to be restrained in his presentation of Socrates' significance. It may be, anyway, that we have an exaggerated idea of the skill, insight, and productivity of Socrates, systematically influenced as we are by his hagiographers, intellectual and literary giants themselves—his students Plato, Xenophon, and the first-generation Socratics who gave rise to the Hellenistic schools that retrojected their projects onto Socrates. With his profound existential effect on the lives and ideals of his followers and associates, Socrates exemplified the life given wholly over to reason.⁹⁸ But from a generation's remove, philosophy need not have seemed so claustrophobically Socratic; and so much more at several generations' remove. Had we not lost basically all of these second- and third-generation writings about Socrates, by authors including Theophrastus, Aristoxenus, and Demetrius, we might have found others echoing Aristotle's judgment (if they were at all independent of it).

Perhaps, of course, Aristotle did not judge Socrates as inadequately serious or inadequately intelligent, but as inadequately forceful in the promulgation of views. Perhaps in his merely asking questions, in his avoiding dogma, in his irony, and in his rejection of physical investigation, he took epistemic humility too far. Aristotle only once mentions Socrates' proclaimed recognition of his own ignorance (*Soph. el.* 183b6–8),⁹⁹ and not as his comparative advantage. He never cites Socrates' commitment to those as yet innocent of philosophy, especially not as Socrates' justification for avoiding conceits of knowledge.

We might conclude by saying that Aristotle shifts the Socratic focus on examining oneself and others to examining the puzzles left over from previous

98 At *Post. an.* 97b15–25, Aristotle gives examples of men reputed for *megalopsuchia*; after listing Alcibiades, Achilles, and Ajax, who were intolerant of insults, he mentions Lysander and Socrates, who exemplify that “greatness of soul” in their indifference to good or bad fortune (ἀδιάφοροι ... εὐτυχούντες καὶ ἀτυχούντες); this is Aristotle's only reference to a character trait that might justify an observer's view that, for Socrates, argument really did conduce to the good life (cf. Deman 1942, 54–7), or at least that he is not wholly ironical (cf. Vlastos 1991, 24), and it may point to an important *topos* of Alcibiades-versus-Socrates (see Murphy [in this volume], 00). A related remark comes in *Rh.* 1398a24–26 concerning Socrates' reason not to go to the court of the tyrant Archelaus (for discussion of Aristotle's source of this remark, see Taylor 1911, 59–60 (who sees it as consistent with Plato's *Gorgias*; Deman 1942, 50–3). The Aristotelian *Problems* 953a26–28 would seem by contrast to have diagnosed “the famous” Socrates' indifference physiologically, as a result of his melancholia. For Aristotle's characterological discussion of Socrates, see Döring 2007.

99 Bolton 1993 argues that Aristotle actually has a deep grasp on Socrates' dialectical method and the meaning of Socrates' disavowal of knowledge; Peterson 2011, 224–9, doubts Aristotle's sensitivity to Socrates' traits.

philosophical efforts.¹⁰⁰ Socrates' rhetorical facility, a favorite topic among both his early and late biographers, and deployed evidently for his interlocutors' self-improvement, gets no notice. We might conclude that whereas Socrates stood for self-knowledge, Aristotle stood for knowledge.¹⁰¹ Or whereas Socrates could be said to have philosophized narrowly, about ethics, he did not philosophize deeply, about the most fundamental things.¹⁰² What either distinction means requires long and careful reflection—indeed, it requires deep study of both the Socratic and Aristotelian literature. For the philosopher, it might mean, therefore, that both Socrates and Aristotle, with Plato between them, must form their curriculum.¹⁰³

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100 Taylor 1933, 132–140, 162, observes that Aristotle makes no reference to Socrates' thinking about *psychê* or teleology.

101 For Aristotle on (largely non-Socratic) self-knowledge, see Oehler 1977; Lewis 1996; Veith 2013; Shields 2017.

102 Aristotle never uses the terms "philosopher," "philosophize," or "philosophy" of Socrates, but does allow that they could be used of him: e.g., *Top.* 101a27 (study of deductions), 104b20 (holding famous paradoxical beliefs), 105b30 (identifying true premises), 118a10 (better than money-making), 163b9 (discerning consequences of assumptions); cf. *Soph. el.* 175a5 (diagnosing equivocations and fallacies); *Rh.* 1394a5 and 1412a12 (making subtle distinctions); *Pol.* 1269a12 (pleasurable on its own), 1282b19 (philosophical works about ethics), 1334a22–33 (as necessary for leisure); *Eth. Nic.* 1164b3 (sharing in philosophy with friends; cf. *Eth. Eud.* 1245a22), 1177a25 (philosophy about human matters); *Cael.* 291b27 (dealing with tough puzzles).

103 I appreciate helpful comments from Christopher C. Raymond.

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What Is Socratic about the Pseudo-Platonica?

Mark Joyal

The Socrates of the pseudo-Platonic dialogues is, we find, on the whole Socratic rather than Platonic, both in characterization and in content of thought.... [These dialogues] tend to perpetuate the earlier and simpler portrait; and the pseudo-Platonic field gives little or no ground for superseding the old tradition, or for enhancing the personality and expanding the doctrine of Socrates to the scale of Plato's own achievement.

TARRANT 1938, 172–3



So Dorothy Tarrant's conclusion to her examination of the works that form the subject of this chapter. It is a confident and seductively simple conclusion, but her confidence is at least partly justified. As we shall see, the Socrates of the pseudo-Platonica shows no interest in or adherence to those doctrines which are generally considered most distinctively Platonic, in particular the Forms and Recollection (*anamnesis*). But against what standard did Tarrant judge the pseudo-Platonic Socrates to be "Socratic"? She does not say explicitly, but we can assume she is thinking of the character who emerges mainly from Plato's *Apology* and his early, aporetic dialogues.¹ Most scholars today would be much more reluctant to disengage the Socrates thus constructed from the source of evidence on which that construction is based. Yet whatever else may be said of Tarrant's study and conclusion, she deserves credit for taking a

1 Tarrant opens her paper (1938, 167) by observing that "discussion on the Platonic Socrates in relation to the historic Socrates has to some extent subsided in recent years," and refers to G.C. Field's articles on the subject published fifteen years earlier. It seems most probable, therefore, that she has in mind (and some of Field's positions strengthen this inference) the debate stimulated by the heretical theories that John Burnet and A.E. Taylor held on the question of the historical Socrates (which Tarrant calls "a provocative one"). There is a clear, authoritative explanation and criticism of the Burnet-Taylor thesis in Guthrie 1969, 351–5.

synthetic approach towards the works which she classified as pseudo-Platonic, something which few others had done before her or have done since.²

Socratic studies have traveled far since Tarrant's day, and in many different directions. An important development for the study of the Socratic tradition is a growing appreciation that the pseudo-Platonica may be more valuable to us, not less, for being fully extant and relatively early products of writers who are not Plato or Xenophon. The time therefore seems ripe for a fresh consideration of the pseudo-Platonic writings which focuses on the Socrates-characters who emerge from them.

1 Defining the Pseudo-Platonica

Readers who are familiar with the topic of the pseudo-Platonica will know that this chapter carries with it a problem of definition which cannot simply be dodged. The works transmitted to us under Plato's name—that is, the Platonic Corpus, organized into nine tetralogies—include several whose authenticity, for a variety of good reasons, is in serious doubt (hence their common label as *Dubia*). The ones over which there is, relatively speaking, the least dispute, though nothing near unanimity, are *Alcibiades* II (*Alc.* II), *Hipparchus* (*Hipparch.*), *Amatores* (or [*Rival*] *Lovers: Amat.*), *Theages* (*Thg.*), *Minos* (*Min.*), *Epinomis* (*Epin.*), and nearly all of the 13 Platonic *Letters*. Two others, *Alcibiades* (*Alc.*) and *Clitophon* (*Clit.*), have in recent years received a more spirited defense against a balance of opinion which has long favored a verdict of non-Platonic authorship.³ A few of these works—*Epinomis*, *Alcibiades* II, *Hipparchus*, and *Amatores*—even had their authenticity called into question by one or more ancient commentators,⁴ but as far as we can tell, it was only at the beginning

2 Her article has been considered significant enough to be reprinted in Patzer 1987 and Irwin 1995.

3 To cite only a few general books in English on Plato which examine the entire Platonic Corpus (all of which contain good summaries of the pseudo-Platonica): Shorey 1933, 415–32, rejects *Minos*, *Hipparchus*, *Theages*, *Amatores*, and wavers over *Epinomis*, *Alcibiades*, *Alcibiades* II, and *Clitophon*; Taylor 1949, 521–40, rejects all the foregoing, apart from *Epinomis*; Guthrie 1969, 470–74; 1979, 385–94, rejects *Epinomis*, *Alcibiades* II, *Hipparchus*, and wavers over the rest; Dillon (in Press 2012, 49–51) rejects *Minos*, *Alcibiades* II, *Hipparchus*, *Amatores*, and *Theages*, while Tarrant and Gonzalez (in Press 2012, 38–9, 44–5) are inconclusive, respectively, over *Alcibiades* and *Clitophon*. English translations of all these works are found most conveniently in Cooper and Hutchinson 1997, which adheres to the traditional tetralogical ordering of the Platonic dialogues.

4 A strong ancient tradition attributed the *Epinomis* to Plato's student Philip of Opus; see Tarán 1975, 7–13; Brisson 2005: 21–3. According to Athenaeus (11.506c), “some” believed that

of the nineteenth century that the others fell under suspicion for the first time and the subject of authenticity in general became the focus of serious research. The authenticity of the *Epinomis* is not relevant to our purpose, since Socrates is not a character in it. I am prepared, however, to declare with confidence that *Alcibiades* II, *Hipparchus*, *Amatores*, *Theages*, and *Minos* are inauthentic. In my opinion, *Alcibiades* and *Clitophon* are spurious too, but just as there now seem to be many scholars who argue or assume that those two works are authentic, there are also some, though far fewer, who treat one or more of *Alcibiades* II, *Hipparchus*, *Amatores*, *Theages* and *Minos* as genuine.⁵

A second set of dialogues represents a different case from the group just considered. This set comprises what is now often called the *Appendix Platónica*, works which were transmitted together with the Platonic Corpus from at least the ninth century (and doubtless much earlier) but are extraneous to the nine “canonical” tetralogies and usually appear after them in the earliest medieval manuscripts in which they are preserved.⁶ These works, often called *Spuria*, are *Eryxias* (*Erx.*), *Axiochus* (*Ax.*), *On Justice* (*Iust.*), and *On Virtue* (*Virt.*), in all of which Socrates is explicitly identified as a speaker,⁷ as well as *Sisyphus* (*Sis.*)

Xenophon was the author of *Alcibiades* II; Athenaeus does not identify any of these people, though he reports his source as Nicias of Nicaea, whose dates are uncertain; see Müller 1975, 315–16; also Neuhausen 2010, 239–40. A sentence in Diogenes Laertius’ *Life of Democritus* (9.37) suggests that Thrasyllus (d. c. 35), court-astrologer of Tiberius and the person to whom the organization of the *Corpus Platonicum* into nine tetralogies is attributed, suspected *Amatores* of being un-Platonic, or at any rate knew that others suspected it; see Joyal 2014, 76 n. 12. Aelian indicates that the authenticity of *Hipparchus* was questioned (*VH* 8.2); once again we do not have corroboration from another ancient source, and it is impossible to determine how widespread this skepticism was.

- 5 I do not include consideration of *Ion*, *Menexenus*, *Hippias Minor*, and *Hippias Major*, which have all in the past had their authenticity called into question by a substantial number of scholars. Today only the last seems to inspire serious doubt about authenticity among more than a very few. For a thorough survey of learned views on its authenticity throughout the twentieth century, see Liminta 1998, 3–62; and for the most recent, extended declaration of inauthenticity, see Heitsch 1999 and 2011, 111–19. Tarrant 2018 has recently examined the nature, origin and authenticity of the *Dubia* as a whole, applying the results of his own stylometric research; see also Tarrant and Roberts 2012.
- 6 Our earliest textual witness for the *Appendix* in its entirety is Parisinus gr. 1807 (A), whose date is approximately 875 (the oldest of all extant Plato mss.). In this codex the *Appendix* appears immediately after the eighth and ninth tetralogies; see further Carlini 2005, 30–3; also Müller 1979.
- 7 There is evidence that the *Appendix* itself may once have consisted of a larger number of works than now survive; see Joyal 2014, 76–8. I leave out of account the pseudo-Platonic (or pseudo-Lucianic) *Halcyon*, whose date is patently much later than the other works under consideration in this chapter (perhaps second half of the second century BCE or later); see Müller 1975, 315–16, 327–9; 2005, 155–6.

and *Demodocus* (*Dem.*), where he is not named as one of the *dramatis personae* but can be assumed to be a principal participant.⁸

Some of the works in the Platonic Corpus mentioned above are certainly spurious; all of them may be. Defenders of the authenticity of any work in the *Appendix Platonica* have been especially rare.⁹ It is a fair assumption that spurious works in general were accepted into the *Corpus Platonicum* and the *Appendix Platonica* in large part as a result of their origin in the Academy or as a result of their “Platonic” qualities of (for example) theme, philosophical focus and argument, literary and linguistic expression, and characterization.¹⁰ Hence their early association with what are generally accepted as authentic Platonic writings makes it reasonable at the outset, at least, to expect that we will encounter a Socrates (or an unnamed chief interlocutor, as the case may be) who has affinities with the Platonic character in terms of his interests, beliefs, temperament, the nature of his interaction with others, his interlocutors’ assumptions about him, and so on. Their acceptance into or alongside the Platonic Corpus substantially increased the likelihood that these writings would survive through antiquity and beyond, unlike so much other early Socratic literature.¹¹

2 Questions of Genre and Structure

This chapter is chiefly about the representations of Socrates that we encounter in pseudo-Platonic dialogues, not the literary vehicles in which these

8 The identification of Socrates as interlocutor in the *Sisyphus* relies mainly on the dialogue’s generic and stylistic qualities, as well as its inclusion in the *Appendix*. *Demodocus* appears to be a collection of four originally separate pieces, the first of which, sometimes labeled *Dem.* I (380a1–382e5), is qualitatively different from the other three, *Dem.* II–IV (382e6–384b5, 384b6–385c1, 385c2–386c7). In *Demodocus* I, a character probably to be identified as Socrates raises a long series of unanswered questions about the efficacy of collective deliberation (compare his advice-giving role in conversation with Demodocus in *Theages*); in *Demodocus* II–IV, an unnamed character, possibly but not certainly Socrates, narrates three short dialogues (for the identification of Socrates, see Müller 1975, 266–8; also n. 17 below).

9 See Oswiecimski 1978, 1979.

10 The dates at which inauthentic works were integrated into the *Corpus Platonicum* and the *Appendix Platonica* was assembled, the identification of the people responsible for these events, and the precise circumstances in which the *Corpus* and the *Appendix* were formed, are topics of great interest but not central to our study.

11 For the production of Socratic dialogues in general between the years 394 and 370 BCE (one dialogue per month, on average), see Rossetti 2001a, 13–21, at 17; also 2001b, 187–91. Rossetti counts as discrete works those exchanges in Xenophon’s *Socratica* which form “dialogical unities” (2001a, 32).

representations are conveyed to us. Yet literary genre is often an important factor in our understanding of Socrates' behavior. At the most fundamental level, nearly all the works under discussion are *Sôkratikoî logoi*, "Socratic conversations," a literary classification which we know to have been in existence at least as early as Aristotle (*Po.* 1447b11).¹² But the label is not really appropriate for every one of them. *Demodocus* I is a monologue; the direct address to Demodocus which occurs in the first sentence (ὦ Δημόδοκε, 380a1) is merely a pretense. Though presented in dramatic not narrated form, *Clitophon* is not really a dialogue, since it consists of Clitophon's reported descriptions and criticisms of Socrates' philosophical conduct as we know it from some of Plato's dialogues.

In one case, the *Axiochus*, genre not only influences but largely determines the character and beliefs of the Socrates whom we encounter there. In so far as the *Axiochus* is essentially a "consolation"—a work in which the main speaker offers words of comfort about death, usually to a bereaved person—it is unique within the *Appendix Platónica*, and there is nothing much like it in the *Corpus Platonicum* either.¹³ Its pages are dominated by Socrates' lengthy exhortations, interrupted first by Clinias, then a few times by his father, Axiochus, who has been suffering acutely from an illness. The literary form of the *consolatio* furnished a prime opportunity for its author to present Socrates in the role of σοφὸς ἀνὴρ, "wise man," who takes advantage of this chance to dispense life-changing advice.¹⁴

All but two of the works in the *Appendix Platónica* are generically "Short Dialogues" (*Kurzdialoge*),¹⁵ and the character and philosophical practice of Socrates are less fully developed in them than they are in the two outliers, *Eryxias* and *Axiochus*, which are similar in their scale to the works in the *Corpus Platonicum* which we are considering. One dialogue among these, namely *Clitophon*, can also be classified as a Short Dialogue.¹⁶ The Socrates of *On Justice*, *On Virtue*, *Sisyphus*, *Demodocus* II–IV (but see n. 8 above) and *Clitophon* shows certain recurring traits and circumstances which, while often shared with the homonymous character in other, "conventional" Socratic dialogues, are especially natural in Short Dialogues, such as the restriction of the number of his respondents to one (but see n. 29 below), his presentation as a character who wastes little time in getting to the problem at hand and

12 See Kahn 1996, 1–3.

13 For the status of *Axiochus* as a *consolatio*, see Hershbell 1981, 19–20; Tulli 2005; O'Keefe 2006.

14 See Joyal 2005; Männlein-Robert 2012, 31–7, 102–5.

15 The identification of this discrete genre of Socratic dialogue is owed to Müller 1975, 9–44; see also Slings 1978, 211–12 (review of Müller).

16 See the analysis in Slings 1999, 18–34.

in keeping the focus there, and the presence of participants in general whose personalities usually exhibit a minimum of development (one result of which is that Socrates does not have plausible opportunities to argue *ad hominem*).¹⁷

Scholars who study the pseudo-Platonica have generally treated these works individually and in isolation from one another. The most important recent exception is Joachim Dalfen, who has formulated the theory that *Minos*, *Alcibiades* II, *Hipparchus*, *Amatores*, *Theages*, and *Clitophon* share so many features—themes, language, argumentative strategies, structure (including lengthy narrative portions) and scale, to name a few—that they must descend from a common intellectual context and set of motives, if not the same pen. Dalfen proposes that the authors were students in the Academy, writing not long after the completion of Plato's aporetic dialogues (*Euthyphro*, *Laches*, *Charmides*, *Lysis*, among others) and of his *Gorgias* (viewed as a transitional work), under his watchful eye and that of others too who may have known Socrates himself.¹⁸ In the next section I shall have occasion to refer to Dalfen's findings; the detail in which he examines material relevant to our discussion will permit a more summary presentation of some important evidence than would otherwise be possible.

3 Socrates in the Pseudo-Platonica

The method of investigation which I follow in this main section is broadly synoptic. This approach is the most economical and informative means of sifting through a large body of highly diverse and sometimes contradictory evidence in order to identify the dominant characteristics of the pseudo-Platonic Socrates.¹⁹

¹⁷ Since Socrates himself is the topic of *Clitophon*, more attention is lavished on his portrait than is usual in a Short Dialogue; see Slings 1999, 16–17, 39–46. *Demodocus* II–IV are early examples of an unpretentious, popular form of literature called *chreiai*, anecdotes or short narrations which are often explicitly or implicitly moralizing and involve at least one famous person and an anonymous respondent (an argument for accepting Socrates as the main participant in *Dem.* II–IV). The best analogues are to be found in Xenophon's *Socratica*, e.g., the rather large concentration of similar exchanges in *Mem.* 3.13.1–14.6; see Gray 1998, 107–22; Müller 1975, 322–3, and Tulli 2005, 257, on the influence of *chreiai* on some works in the *Appendix*; Hirzel 1895, 1.144–6, 341–2; Souilhé 1930, 40–1.

¹⁸ See Dalfen 2005, 56–65, and (in greater detail) 2009, 27–67; for his view of *Gorgias* as a transitional work, see Dalfen 2004, 114–18. For recent research into possible reasons why these six works, as well as *Alcibiades*, came to be included in the Platonic Corpus, see Tarrant 2013, esp. 11–22, and 2018. Thesleff 1967, 11–18, 155–8, provides detailed examinations of the structure and content of the pseudo-Platonica that often complement Dalfen's theories.

¹⁹ Hereafter designated as “Socrates_{ps}” in contexts where clarity is needed; the Platonic Socrates will be designated “Socrates_p”, the Xenophontic Socrates as “Socrates_x”.

There are, of course, multiple Socrates-characters in the pseudo-Platonica, just as Socrates_p is himself not a single character.²⁰ That fact makes the recurring features and emphases which we find in Socrates_{ps} the more significant and meaningful, as we shall see at once.

Nearly without exception Socrates_{ps} asks questions and insists on receiving answers to them (*Axiochus* is the most notable counter-example). Emphasis on this feature is especially apparent in the opening words of three dialogues where Socrates_{ps}, in a fashion almost entirely different from Socrates_p, takes the initiative by peremptorily lobbing questions at his anonymous interlocutors:²¹

Hipparchus 225a1–2: What is greed? What can it be, and who are the greedy?

Minos 313a1: What do we consider law to be?

On Justice 372a1–2: Can you tell us what justice is? Or is it in your opinion not worth talking about?²²

In these three instances Socrates wastes no time in establishing the topics of his discussions; there are no preliminaries, no pleasantries to cause delay. More telling still is the opening of *On Virtue* (376a1–2), a Short Dialogue which draws heavily upon the *Meno*.²³ Here the questions with which the title-character opened *Meno* (70a1–4)²⁴ are instead given to *Socrates* in modified form:

Is virtue teachable? Or is it not teachable, but instead do men become good by nature, or in some other way?

20 Contra Peterson 2011.

21 The openings of *Cratylus* and *Philebus* are only superficially comparable to these instances.

22 All translations are my own.

23 To such a degree that editors use its text to establish the text of *Meno*; see Bluck 1961, 147; Müller 1975, 197–220; Vancamp 2010, 100–2; cf. Souilhé 1930, 25.

24 “Can you tell me, Socrates, whether virtue is teachable? Or is it not teachable, *but acquired instead by practice*? Or is it *neither acquired by practice* nor learned, but belongs to people by nature or in some other way?” The words in italics (ἀλλ’ ἀσκητόν; ἢ οὔτε ἀσκητόν) present an alternative (acquisition of virtue by *askēsis*, “practice”) which is not raised in *On Virtue*; moreover, these words do not appear in one of the primary witnesses to the text of *Meno*, i.e., Vindobonensis suppl. gr. 39 (F). For discussion of the textual evidence for this passage, see Bluck 1961, 202–3; Müller 1975, 198, with n. 1; Scott 2006, 16–18, with n. 10 (but not examined in Vancamp 2010, 46–9, 100–2, 108–9).

We can explain the abrupt opening of *Meno* as reflecting Plato's desire to depict Meno's impetuosity, which is evoked all the more plainly by Socrates' lengthy and calm response (70a5–71d2).²⁵ The opening of *On Virtue*, however, is entirely different.²⁶ The addiction to probing interrogation is, of course, the basic element of Socrates_p' behavior (though it is only one of the ways in which Socrates_x works to conclusions), and Socrates_{ps} adheres to it even where it seems less than perfectly suited to his and his interlocutor's needs. Hence in *On Justice* 373b9–c3 Socrates moves the interrogation along by providing his anonymous respondent with the correct answer to his own question, a tactic at odds with the aporetic Socrates_p. This apparent impatience is perhaps a symptom of the author's operation within the genre of *Kurzdialoge*, but we should equally observe Socrates_{ps}' assertiveness in all these passages.

In some places Socrates_{ps} reflects on the conduct of his interrogation or demonstrates concern for its methodology. In *Sisyphus* 388d6–8 he acknowledges that his conclusion ("It looks as though people don't inquire into what they know but what they don't know," d5–6) may seem captious (*eristikos*), presented only for the sake of argument (cf. 390b5–c1; also *Euthyd.* 277d1–278e2). In *Hipparchus* 225b10–c2 he rebukes his respondent for not answering in the manner that he should (cf. *Min.* 315d6–e4, quoted below), and in 229e3–6 (cf. 230a8–10) he offers him the chance to take back an argumentative move that he has earlier made (227b10–c3, d7–8). In *Eryxias* 399a6–c6 he remarks on the *ad hominem* attitude which the present company takes towards the arguments that they hear.²⁷ *Clitophon* is itself an examination of the methods and goals of the literary Socrates. In *On Justice* 372a9–373e10—a passage which occupies about a third of the whole dialogue—Socrates responds to

25 See Bluck 1961, 125; Scott 2006, 11–13. Bluck also suggests (1961, 199) that the immediate plunge into the dialogue's problem may reflect Plato's excitement over the discovery of his theory of *anamnesis* ("recollection").

26 The assignment to Socrates of the questions that open *On Virtue* (see in general Müller 1975, 198–9; Taylor 1949, 538) is especially striking when we recall that his response to Meno had been to object that Meno's questions could not be solved until the logically prior question, "What is virtue?," had been answered. Anyone after Plato's lifetime who was interested in discussing the topic "Can virtue be taught?"—of perennial interest in the ancient world (see Müller 1975, 220–49; briefly, Souilhé 1930, 24–5)—would have been attracted to *Meno*. *Meno*'s unique (for the Platonic Corpus) interrogative opening *in mediis rebus* made it an especially suitable basis for the writer of a Short Dialogue.

27 Cf. esp. c1–6: "Perhaps the attitude your listeners have taken towards you and Prodicus is like this [i.e., like the attitude which jurors have]. They thought that Prodicus was a sophist and a charlatan, but they think you are an important man who is involved in the affairs of the city. They also believe that they should not concentrate on the argument itself but rather on the character of the people who are arguing."

his interlocutor's statement, that he cannot reply to the question "What is justice?" in the way that Socrates wants him to do, by explaining, step by step, and with examples, the nature of inductive reasoning.²⁸ In at least some of these instances Socrates' behavior seems pedagogical, which perhaps reflects the philosophical or even institutional provenance of the works in question.

Usually Socrates_{ps} questions and argues with individuals, not groups; the two *Alcibiades* dialogues provide the clearest examples. This behavior is consistent with the picture that Plato draws both programmatically in his *Apology* (29d4–30a4, 30e5–31a1, 31b1–5, 36c2–d1) and when Socrates_p is in elenctic action in many dialogues. Adherence to this characteristic in the Short Dialogues can be explained simply through reference to the obvious constraints imposed by length: here the discussions take place between Socrates and one interlocutor only.²⁹ Socrates' behavior in the lengthier pseudo-Platonica sometimes demonstrates a more nuanced kind of interaction. Consider, for instance, *Amatores*, where Socrates directs his initial inquiry to a single person (132b4–7), an *erastês* of one of the students in Dionysius' school (the dialogue's dramatic setting). Very soon, a rival *erastês* to the boy breaks in to criticize the first respondent (132c4–10). Socrates then clarifies that his question (τὸ ἐρώτημα, 132d7) had been addressed to everyone (εἰς κοινόν). Although he carries the discussion forward with only one of the *erastai*, at 135a1–3 he observes that everyone (ἄπαντες) is now in a state of *aporia* and suggests (without result) that questions should be put to the boys (τὰ μεράχια) who are present. Practice, therefore, conflicts with Socrates' stated intentions: superficially he retains a familiar mask by concentrating his attention on one person, but his behavior here is more didactic, since his discussion is accommodated to a larger audience. In *Eryxias*, Socrates engages sequentially the dialogue's cast of characters, Erasistratus, Eryxias (with an interruption by Socrates for the excursus involving Prodicus and a young person), and Critias, a scheme which is reminiscent of the structure of *Republic* 1 (Cephalus, Polemarchus, Thrasymachus) and of *Gorgias* (Gorgias, Polus, Callicles).³⁰ Even where Socrates_{ps} deals with both a young man and a father who is eager to intercede on his behalf, as he does in *Theages*, he draws his focus, both plainly and subtly,

28 See Müller 1975, 172–4.

29 A third, silent character may be implied by the use of the plural pronoun in the opening sentence of *On Justice*—ἔχεις ἡμῖν εἰπεῖν ὅτι ἐστὶν τὸ δίκαιον; ("Can you tell us what justice is?," 372a1)—but ἡμῖν may simply be first-person plural *pro* singular; see Müller 1975, 130 n. 1; Joyal 2000, 217 (on *Thg.* 122d7); Manuwald 2005, 137 n. 13. This is, however, a less satisfying explanation for the series of first-person plural pronouns and verbs in Socrates' opening words in *Sisyphus* (387b1–5).

30 For discussion of this structure in *Gorgias* and *Republic*, see Dodds 1959, 4–5.

upon the son.³¹ A possible exception to this otherwise consistent portrayal of Socrates_{ps} occurs in *Clitophon*, which Slings has explained as a reflection of that work's focus on criticism of the *literary* Socrates, whose audience is the reading public.³² Socrates_x usually addresses his questions to individuals, too, even when an audience is present, but this character is more likely to take advantage of or play to the crowd (e.g., *Mem.* 2.5, 3.1.4–11, 4.2.3–5).³³

The personal nature of Socrates_p' investigations is often closely tied to the circumstances of his chance encounters with potential respondents (e.g., in *Euthyphro*, *Laches*, *Charmides*, *Lysis*).³⁴ These dramatic set-ups are not simply incidental or trivial: Socrates_p explains in *Ap.* 29d4–30a4 (cited in the previous paragraph) that his interrogations are the results of chance meetings; he does not seek out dialectical partners. Likewise chance or coincidence is a factor in the dramatic circumstances of some of the longer pseudo-Platonica, *Thg.* 121a1–5, *Amat.* 132a1–5, c4–6, *Erx.* 392a1–393a6, *Ax.* 364a1–b4. Even the author of *Sisyphus*, working within the constraints of the Short Dialogue, manages to integrate this element into his dialogue's *mise-en-scène*.³⁵

Socrates_{ps}' interest is to define concepts, in *Hipparchus* (τὸ φιλοκερδές, “love of gain”), *Minos* (ὁ νόμος, “law”) and *On Justice* (τὸ δίκαιον, “justice”), as also in *Amatores* (τὸ φιλοσοφεῖν/φιλοσοφία, “philosophy,” 133c1–*fin.*), *Sisyphus* (τὸ βουλευέσθαι/συμβουλή, “deliberation,” “advice,” 387c6–*fin.*) and, beginning at its mid-point, *Eryxias* (τὸ πλουτεῖν, “wealth,” 399e2–*fin.*).³⁶ Of a different metaphysical order, and nearer the end of the dialogue, is αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό, literally “the itself itself,” in *Alc.* 129b1 (cf. 130d4).³⁷ In order to achieve workable, if not universal, definitions of these concepts, Socrates_{ps} sometimes discards as inadequate the particular instantiations which his interlocutors adduce, as

31 See Joyal 2000, 17–18, 27–8, 51–2.

32 See Slings 1999, 46 (44–6 for Socrates' focus on single respondents). Moore provides a different interpretation of the role and purpose of the speeches in the *Clitophon* (2012, 269–73).

33 Audiences or multiple companions appear also in, e.g., *Mem.* 3.11, 3.14, 4.2.1–2. The evidence of Xenophon is complicated by the fact that he sometimes claims to have been present at the conversations which he reports, e.g., 2.4.1, 5.1, 4.3.2–3. Eryxias' blush and (nervous?) laughter (*Erx.* 395c5–d7) seem to be caused by his realization that he has looked foolish in front of others (τοὺς παρόντας, c6), as does his feeling of shame a little later (εἰ μὴ ἤσχύνετο τοὺς παρόντας ὁ Ἐρυξίας κτλ., 397c1); cf. Prodicus' behavior in 398b6–c3 (see also Döring 2005, 72–3); also *Amat.* 134a9–b4. On these and other Platonic passages in which Socrates' interlocutors respond with shame and blushing, see Gooch 1988.

34 See Blondell 2002, 63–6.

35 For further examples and evidence, see Joyal 2000, 200 (on *Thg.* 121a4).

36 “What is virtue (ἀρετή)?” is the question with which *Meno*, the main source of *On Virtue*, concerns itself, but the compositional choices which the author of *On Virtue* makes exclude that theme from any role in his work (see nn. 24–26 above, with discussion).

37 See Renaud and Tarrant 2015, 58–9.

in *Minos* 313a3–b5 and *Hipparchus* 230d9–*fin.* (cf. *Sis.* 387c6–d6). Frequently the favored approach to problems of identification is to draw analogies, often, as in genuine Plato, with rational skills (*technai*), sometimes at greater length than seems necessary to make the point for interlocutor or reader, perhaps again for didactic purpose, e.g., *Alcibiades* 106e5–108e4 (reading and writing, lyre-playing, wrestling, house-building, medicine, ship-building, physical training), 124e7–126a4;³⁸ *Alcibiades* II 145c9–d7 (horsemanship, archery, boxing, wrestling, medicine, aulos-playing); *Hipparchus* 226a2–d1 (farming, horsemanship, helmsmanship, military command, flute-playing, lyre-playing).³⁹ In *Amatores* 135e1–*fin.*, analogies with *technai* lead to the paradoxical conclusion that philosophy, if defined as Socrates' interlocutor has just defined it, is useless in comparison with rational skills (and philosophers are useless in comparison with craftsmen). In *On Justice* 373a6–e6 Socrates bypasses analogy with individual *technai* and appeals straightaway to their fundamental characteristics of weighing, counting, and measurement (cf. *Min.* 316a4–8). But simple comparisons rather than analogies with *technai* are also used in order to clarify the nature of the issue at hand, e.g., *Eryxias* 399e10–400e12 (currency and wealth in Athens as compared with conventions in Carthage, Sparta, Ethiopia, and Scythia) and *Minos* 313b6–314b6 (comparison of "law" with speech, sight, and hearing; cf. *Clit.* 407e8–408a4).⁴⁰ Socrates_x also shows an interest in craft-analogy, for example by comparing political rule to *technai* in so far as political rule is for people who *know* (*Mem.* 3.9.10–13; cf. *Min.* 316d9–317b1); likewise Aeschines' Socrates draws analogies with *technai* (e.g., *SSR* VI A 48.1–6, 53.10–15 [*Alcibiades*], 80.5–12 [*Miltiades*]).

Often Socrates_{ps} shifts his inquiry from definition of a concept to the identification of people who exhibit it in their actions:

Amatores 135a6–9: Since I thought that they were losing interest in the argument, I sought to examine it in a different way, and I said, "Of the subjects which the philosopher must learn, which exactly do we guess they are, since it isn't all of them, or many?"

Demodocus 380d4–6 (discussing the purpose of advising): Isn't it the case that the knowledgeable all give the same advice, so that when you've listened to the one who knows, you ought to end it?

38 See Renaud and Tarrant 2015, 36–7.

39 Cf. also *Min.* 316c4–317a5; *Thg.* 123d3–124b3; *Clit.* 408e3–410a6; *Virt.* 376b2–c5; *Sis.* 389c5–d4, 390c5–d1.

40 See Dalfen 2005, 57; 2009, 42, 51, 53, 61–3.

Sisyphus 390c5–d3: Don't you think that some people differ from others in regard to good deliberation and being good deliberators, just as in all other spheres of knowledge some people differ from others, carpenters from carpenters, doctors from doctors, flute-players from flute-players, and all other craftsmen differ from each other ...

Cf. 391d2–5, the dialogue's final words

This transition, which is common enough for Socrates_p (e.g., *La.* 190d7–196a3, *Resp.* 331d2–336a10), can be explained by the fact that Socrates_{ps} is not inquiring into the οὐσία, the “essence” or “being,” of the concept under investigation (nowhere in the pseudo-Platonica do we encounter an interest in the theory of Forms).⁴¹ In *Iust.* 372a9–373e10, however, Socrates presents this transition as a pedagogical tool, in order to explain the process of induction (see above).

An interesting contrast with this pattern occurs in *Eryxias*. Socrates, Erasistratus, and Eryxias *begin* their discussion with a consideration of the wealthiest people (393a7–399a5). Since they and Critias (who makes his entrance at 395e6–7) are dealing with particular contingencies, wealth is shown to be sometimes good, sometimes bad, depending on circumstances and the character of the people involved. It is not until 399c8–d5 (halfway through the dialogue) that Socrates draws attention to the importance of determining what “wealth itself” (αὐτὸ τὸ πλουτεῖν, d5) is, though he characterizes this question as “the final touch (τὰ λοιπά) on our discussion” (d1–2) and as “one remaining part (ἐπίλοιπόν τι) of our investigation” (d2–3); cf. “it remains (λοιπόν) to investigate what wealth itself is” (d4–5). These words are, I think, ironic understatement: in reality the investigation which he is proposing is logically prior, not a capstone, as he himself immediately points out: “unless you first determine this, you won't be able to reach an agreement on whether it [i.e., wealth] is bad or good” (d5–6).⁴²

Socrates_{ps}' dialectical practice usually proceeds from the assumption that he does not himself have answers to the questions which he asks (*On Justice* and *On Virtue* are exceptions). He explicitly asserts his ignorance in the *Theages*:

41 Cf. Aristotle's famous words in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1103b26–30): “Since the present inquiry is not theoretical in its purpose, just as the others are—for we are investigating not in order to know what virtue is, but in order to become good, otherwise there would be no use in it—we must investigate how to perform actions.” For discussion of some related Aristotelian texts, see Guthrie 1981, 77–9.

42 For the use of this kind of understatement in Platonic contexts, see Joyal 2000, 215 (on *Thg.* 122c8), 2016, 122 n. 40 (on *Thg.* 128b4).

Theages 128b1–6: I know none of those blessed and fine skills [sc. that the sophists know]—if only I did—but I am always saying, of course, that I actually know virtually nothing except a rather small skill, namely the things that have to do with *erôs* (τὰ ἐρωτικά). At *this* skill I am reputed to be more adept than anyone who has gone before me or is alive today.

Here Socrates' disavowal is an emphatic one, principally because it (and the theme of *erôs*, to be discussed below) is central to the structure and meaning of the dialogue.⁴³ A disavowal occurs also in the *Axiochus*:

Axiochus 366b5–7: Like most Athenians, you think that since I inquire into things, I am knowledgeable about something. I would pray that I knew these things that are common knowledge, so far am I from knowing extraordinary things.

This frame of mind can be compared to what we see in *Sisyphus*:

Sisyphus 387d9–388a6: *Sis.*: Do you really not know what deliberation is? *Soc.*: No I don't, at least if it's something different from when a person who doesn't know what he has to do says whatever comes into his head ...

Just as often, the point about Socrates_{ps}' lack of knowledge is made less directly through the concept of the "shared investigation":

Minos 315d6–e4: *Soc.*: It's no surprise, my friend, if what you're saying is right and I fail to recognize it; but as long as you're expressing opinions in your style in a long speech, and I do the same, I think we'll probably never agree on anything. If, however, the investigation is made a shared (κοινόν) one, we would perhaps agree. So if you like, ask me questions and investigate together (κοινῇ) with me. (Cf. "Look at it this way together with me," 315d6–e4; also *Sis.* 389c4–5.)

Alcibiades II 139e6–140a2: *Soc.*: So do you think that every eye-sickness is an illness? *Alc.*: Yes. *Soc.*: And that every illness is an eye-sickness? *Alc.*: No, I certainly don't, but I really don't know what to say. *Soc.*: But if you pay attention to me, perhaps the two of us will find it by examining together.⁴⁴

43 See Joyal 2016, 119–45 (123 on the emphatic nature of Socrates' claims here).

44 Cf. *Alc.* II 147e5–6: Socrates remarks on the great confusion (*aporia*) which he thinks he and Alcibiades share. For a slightly milder concession, cf. 143b6–c3.

Eryxias 399e1–2: I'm ready to give you (i.e., Erasistratus, Eryxias, Critias) as much help as I can to complete your investigation (συνδιασκοπεῖσθαι; but Socrates then *leads* the investigation to its conclusion).

Implicated in Socratic ignorance and the need for joint inquiry is the occasional rejection of long speeches or monologues, as in *Alcibiades* 106b1–4, *Minos* 315d6–e4, and *Sisyphus* 387c6–d2. This criticism is a convenient trope in the *Kurzdialoge*, where there is no room for μακρολογία.⁴⁵ Socrates_p similarly rejects long speeches (e.g., *Prt.* 334c7–335c7, *Grg.* 449b4–8, *Ion* 530d6–531a2); but even more than Socrates_p, Socrates_{ps} frequently ignores such aversion by indulging in monologues. It happens most patently in *Axiochus*, where, coherently with that work's status as a *consolatio*, Socrates assumes the *ex cathedra* role of wise advisor. As we have already observed, lengthy speeches or narratives are features of the six *Dubia* which Dalfen has grouped together into a relatively homogeneous set (see above).⁴⁶ Thus Socrates in *Minos* 318e6–321b4 digresses on the information about the legendary Minos that can be gathered from Homer and Hesiod. In *Hipparchus* 228b4–229d7 he explains the good works which Hipparchus carried out for Athens and the circumstances of Hipparchus' death. In *Theages* 128d2–130e7 he describes the role that his divine sign (τὸ δαιμόνιον σημεῖον) plays in his associations with other people.⁴⁷ *Demodocus* I itself is entirely a monologue, consisting largely of unanswered questions.⁴⁸

Since Socrates_{ps} does not know any better than his interlocutor the solution to their inquiry, he does not overtly assume the role of teacher (διδάσκαλος) and does not address his respondents as students (μαθηταί).⁴⁹ Rather they

45 See also Müller 1975, 52 n. 2.

46 See Dalfen 2005, 59–60; 2009, 40–1; Tarrant 2018, 398–407; also Renaud and Tarrant 2015, 45–6, 51–3.

47 Reference to Socrates' divine sign is also made in the *Alcibiades*. The representations of this phenomenon in it and *Theages* share features with those in both genuine Plato and Xenophon's *Socratica*, but they also include important departures. All these features cannot be discussed here; see Joyal 2000, 65–71, 98–9, and 2016; and for the influence of the representations in *Alcibiades* and *Theages* on subsequent discussions, see Joyal 1995.

48 Cf. also *Alc.* 121a3–124b6 (Socrates' warning to Alcibiades about the nature of his Persian and Spartan competition); *Alc.* II 141c9–143a5 (the hazards of praying to fulfill one's ambitions), 148b9–150b4 (the gods' arbitrary judgments in response to prayers); *Er.* 397c4–399a5 (Socrates' story of Prodicus' argument with a young man “a couple days ago”). For discussion of the role played by these macrologues, see in general Dönt 1963; also Schorn 2005 (*Hipparchus*); Joyal 2016 (*Theages*); Döring 2005 (*Eryxias*); Müller 1975, 114–17 (*Demodocus* I).

49 These positions are expressed forthrightly by Plato in *Ap.* 19d8–20a2, 33a1–b8, and by Xenophon in *Mem.* 1.2.3, but elsewhere in the *Memorabilia* Xenophon does not hesitate to

are engaged, as we have seen, in a shared search, ostensibly as equals; hence Socrates_{ps}' relationship with his respondents is characterized in other ways. For instance, his interlocutors may be described not as students but as "associates" (οἱ συνόντες), a practice which occurs with much frequency in Xenophon (e.g., *Mem.* 1.2.17, 39, 3.8.1, 4.3.1; cf. οἱ συνουσιασταί, 1.6.1), but less commonly in Plato.⁵⁰ This linguistic practice is found in abundance in *Theages*, where συνεῖναι, συνουσία and συγγίγνεσθαι (as well as the semantically related (συν)διατρίβω) have thematic significance.⁵¹ The author of *Clitophon* is explicit about the need to apply verbal surrogates for μαθητής (and, by implication, about the practice of doing so in Socratic literature):

Clitophon 408c5–7: I didn't ask questions of *you* at the start, Socrates, but of some of your contemporaries and fellow-desirers, or companions (τῶν ἡλικιωτῶν τε καὶ συνεπιθυμητῶν ἢ ἐταίρων σὼν), or whatever name we should give to the sort of relationship they have with you.⁵²

Less direct is the evidence of the *Minos*: as he drives home his final set of questions to his anonymous interlocutor, Socrates appeals to "Zeus, god of friendship" (φέρει δὴ πρὸς Διὸς φίλιου, 321c4).

The special nature of Socrates_{ps}' relationships, however, is not simply a matter of verbal habit. In the pseudo-Platonica one feature emerges especially prominently, nowhere as clearly as in *Alcibiades*. Here Socrates makes his attraction (*erôs*) to Alcibiades the basis for their long-postponed meeting, shortly before Alcibiades is to address the Athenian Assembly for the first time; it is because of *erôs* that Socrates is concerned about the well-being of Alcibiades himself and that Alcibiades will cultivate justice from that time forward.⁵³ Alcibiades is, of course, the best-known object of Socrates' *erôs*, not only in Plato's *Symposium* but also in Aeschines', Antisthenes', and (probably)

describe Socrates as a teacher, e.g., 1.2.17–18, 6.13–14, 4.7.1.

50 For the restricted use of συνεῖναι ("to be/associate with") and συνουσία ("association") in such contexts in Plato, see Tarrant 2005, 133–141. Xenophon uses the words more frequently, e.g., *Mem.* 1.2.18, 24, 38, 4.1.1, 4.2.40; he also makes extensive use of ὁμιλέω and ὁμιλητής in the *Memorabilia* to express essentially the same idea, e.g., 1.2.12, 15, 39, 48, 4.3.2, 7.1. For Aeschines' use of συνεῖναι in Socratic contexts, cf. *SSR* VI A 53.27 (*Alcibiades*), VI A 80.7 (*Miltiades*).

51 See Joyal 2016, 126–7. I have argued elsewhere that Socrates' role in *Theages* is most accurately characterized as that of "mediator" (Joyal 2012, 332–3, with n. 22).

52 On this passage, see Slings 1999, 298–9, and (rather differently) Rowe 2005, 219–20; Moore 2012, 267–8.

53 For the influence of *Alcibiades* on Platonist thinking about *erôs*, see Dillon 1994.

Euclides' *Alcibiades*, and in Phaedo's *Simon*.⁵⁴ So it is no surprise to see *erôs* surface also in *Alcibiades* II, where it again possesses a pedagogical dimension (esp. 150d1–151a2) and functions as something of an exclamation point at the conclusion of the dialogue:

Alcibiades II 151b4–c2: *Soc.*: But I accept this [sc. a wreath from Alcibiades for the good advice that Socrates has given him], and I would be glad to see myself in receipt of any other of the things given by you as well.... I think that I am not in a smaller storm than Creon was, and I would like to be victorious over your lovers.⁵⁵

But Socrates_{ps} expresses or displays the power of *erôs* far beyond his association with Alcibiades. It is prominent, of course, in *Amatores*, where he finds himself between two *erastai* as he and they observe their *erômenos*. The dramatic setting—the school of the *grammatistês* Dionysius—is of a familiar kind for Socrates, and so is his physical position, sitting directly beside his interlocutor(s).⁵⁶ Earlier we noted Socrates' introduction of the erotic impulse (τὰ ἐρωτικὰ) into *Theages* 128b1–6; in fact the theme is more integral to this dialogue than that single passage might suggest.⁵⁷ Telling in its own way is the apparently gratuitous insertion of the topic into *On Virtue* 377d7–e1 (Socrates is the speaker): “You know that Pericles for his part raised his sons Paralos and Xanthippus, and you were in love (ἐρασθήναι), I think, with one of them” (cf. e6–7: Socrates refers to this son of Pericles as his interlocutor's *paidika*). The author's intention here appears to have been no more than to add, as economically as possible, some additional Socratic color to a Short Dialogue.⁵⁸ In general, Socrates_{ps} moves naturally within the homoerotic atmosphere of these dialogues' environments.⁵⁹

It is clear, I think, that we are dealing with one of Socrates' most pervasive and characteristic traits in the literature about him, not only in the earliest *Sôkratikoî logoi* but throughout the history of the Socratic tradition. In the

54 See Kahn 1996, 4–35; Neuhausen 2005, 176–9.

55 For the nature of *erôs* in *Alcibiades* II and its relation to *erôs* in *Alcibiades*, see Neuhausen 2010, 77–88.

56 The evidence for these settings is both literary and visual, with the former ranging throughout the *Corpus Platonicum* and the *Appendix*, as well as in other Socratic sources; see Joyal 2000, 290, 296; 2016, 121 n. 38; Blondell 2002, 63–4.

57 See Joyal 2016, 119–31.

58 Müller, however, has explained the passage within the larger context of *On Virtue* 377c1–e1 (1975, 196 and n. 9). According to Heidel (1896, 22), it is just “an insipid jest.”

59 Tarrant 2012, esp. 158–60, has explored the possible intellectual contexts in which the *Dubia* in particular integrated an interest in Socratic *erôs*; see also Tarrant 2018, 403–7.

pseudo-Platonica, however, *erôs* does not, as it does in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, afford a path to the apprehension of transcendent being. Precisely what the historical Socrates said and believed about *erôs* is, frankly, impossible for us to know. Indeed, the pervasiveness of *erôs* across so wide a spectrum of Socratic literature makes it even harder to isolate the erotic features that may have belonged to the real person.

In contrast with Socrates_{ps}, who does not know, there is the expert, whose authority he frequently exalts or invokes:

On Justice 373a6–b5: Whenever we disagree about something, we go to experts. Cf. 375c3–6: the just person is just on account of knowledge (δι' ἐπιστήμην); he is just on account of wisdom (διὰ σοφίαν), while the unjust person is unjust on account of ignorance (δι' ἀμαθίαν); also 375a7–b6.⁶⁰

Minos 316c3–317d2: Those who know (οἱ ἐπιστήμονες) agree with one another, whether Greeks with Greeks or Greeks with barbarians, and they do so always. What they know does not change.

On Virtue 376b2–c5: To become skilled (σοφοί) at something, we go to those who are good at (ἀγαθοί) that thing.

Demodocus I 380b1–c6: Either there are those who know how to give good advice, or there are not. If there are such people, then there is no need to take advice from many in an assembly; one knowledgeable person will do. Cf. *Sis.* 390b1–4.

Socrates_{ps}' prime example of an expert, as we have seen, is the person who has technical knowledge, that is, knowledge of a rational skill, or *technê*.

But Socrates_{ps} sometimes looks to other kinds of authorities. These σοφοί are frequently poets, especially Homer, but also Hesiod, Archilochus, Solon, Anacreon, Euripides, and others.⁶¹ This practice is entirely conventional,

60 Müller (1975, 168–71) discusses the relationship between these texts and the Socratic tenet that all wrongdoing is unintentional.

61 A partial catalogue: Homer: *Alc.* 112a10–c1, 132a5; *Alc.* II 142d4–e1, 147b1–d8 (*Margites*; Homer is the σοφώτατος poet [147c6–7]), 149c8–e1, 150d6–e4; *Amat.* 135a3–5; *Ax.* 367d3–368a3; *Virt.* 379d5–6; cf. *Hipparch.* 228b7–c1; Homer, Hesiod, Thespis, Phrynichus: *Min.* 318e2–321b4; Hesiod: *Dem.* II 383b5–c3; Archilochus: *Erx.* 397e10–12; Solon: *Amat.* 133c4–6; Anacreon: *Thg.* 125d10–e3; Euripides: *Alc.* 113c2–4; *Alc.* II 146a5–6, 151b5–c2; *Thg.* 125b5–d5 (but see Joyal 1992); *Ax.* 368a4–5; Epicharmus: *Iust.* 374a5–b3; *Ax.* 366c4–5. The appearance of Aesop in *Alc.* 122e3–123a4 is unsurprising.

familiar to us not only from Plato's and Xenophon's writings but from the habits of many ancient Greek prose writers as well. Like Socrates in the works of Plato's earlier period (and in Xenophon's *Socratica*), but in contrast with the behavior of Socrates_p elsewhere, nowhere is Socrates_{ps}' attitude towards these poets a negative one.⁶² In addition, Socrates_{ps} occasionally buttresses or gives depth to his positions by citing mythological or historical exempla. The evidence in *Minos* and *Hipparchus* has already been noticed; in *Alcibiades* 11 Socrates applies the stories of Oedipus (138b9–c5, 140e10–141a5) and Orestes (143c8–e7, 144b11–c5) to the problem of the efficacy of prayer; and in *Theages* 124c1–e3 he rolls out a series of mythical and historical figures in an attempt to draw a correct reply from Theages about absolute rule. But the largest store of such material is *Axiochus*, where its range and variety is exceptionally wide, and it is one of the principal means by which the author builds up Socrates' position in that work as σοφὸς ἀνὴρ, "wise man."⁶³

Socrates_{ps} appeals to other authorities too. Prodicus "the wise" (ὁ σοφός) is adduced both in *Ax.* 366c1, immediately after Socrates' disavowal of knowledge in 366b5–7 (see above), and in 369b5–370a6. In *Erx.* 397c6–399c6 Prodicus again appears as a "wise man" (σοφὸς ἀνὴρ) in an illustrative digression.⁶⁴ The (slightly contrived) dramatic circumstances of *Sisyphus* (387b1–5) involve Socrates' attendance the previous day at an *epideixis* by Stratonicus, also a "wise man" (σοφὸς ἀνὴρ), but more precisely, a famous player and teacher of the kithara.⁶⁵ Notably, however, in *Virt.* 377c2–378c4 Socrates observes (consistently with Socrates_p) that the great statesmen of fifth-century Athens—Themistocles, Aristides, Pericles, and Thucydides—did not have knowledge of *aretê* and could not teach it, since they obviously did not teach it to their sons. Contrary to Socrates_p (and *Clit.* 410a7–b3), but like Socrates_x, Socrates in *Iust.* 374c4–d5 abides by the authority of the traditional ethic that it is just to help friends and harm enemies.⁶⁶

Since Socrates_{ps} does not teach and does not lay claim to a body of knowledge, he cannot (and cannot be said to) impart "wisdom" (σοφία) or make

62 So Smith 2007, esp. 45–7, on Plato's attitudes at different times in his career.

63 See Joyal 2005, 110–12; Männlein-Robert et al. 2012, 17–31, 105–11, 141–53.

64 The views which are ascribed to Prodicus in *Ax.* are clearly Epicurean, a disquisition on the belief that "death is nothing to us"; they are ultimately discarded for other opinions about death; see Joyal 2005, 109–10; Männlein-Robert et al. 2012, 78 n. 79. There is irony in the characterization of Prodicus in *Erx.* as σοφὸς ἀνὴρ, since his behavior as recounted there makes him appear to his audience as "a sophist and a charlatan" (399c2). Prodicus is similarly presented as a giver of wise advice in Xen. *Mem.* 2.1.21 (Prodicus ὁ σοφός, again).

65 For Stratonicus, see Müller 1975, 46–8, 99–102; Nails 2002, 343.

66 Cf. Pl. *Resp.* 331e3–335d13, and X. *Mem.* 4.2.12–18; see Müller 1975, 167–8; Slings 1999, 193–8.

others “wise” (σοφοί). In the pseudo-Platonica his effect on them is different. Thus in a few instances the final outcome of a discussion is inconclusive, in so far as it ends in an uncomfortable impasse for the interlocutor (and for Socrates), sometimes described as *aporia*: *Min.* 321d1–6 (the likelihood of embarrassment accompanies the respondent’s *aporia*; cf. αἰσχρόν γε [d7], picking up αἰσχυνθεῖμεν [d4]), *Amat.* 139a6–8 (*aporia* accompanied by a feeling of embarrassment; cf. 135a1–3), *Sis.* 391d2–5, *Dem.* 11–14 384a6–b5, 385c1, 386c4–7.⁶⁷ The *aporia* may be of a general kind and may occur well before the dialogue’s end: Socrates’ respondent simply does not know how to answer a question or series of questions that Socrates has asked.⁶⁸ In contrast, the impasse reached at the conclusion of Plato’s “aporetic” dialogues (e.g., *Euthyphro*, *Charmides*, *Laches*, *Meno*, *Euthydemus*) is of a special kind. Here it is the analogy of ethical concepts with *technai* that leads to the logical *aporia*: a *technê* has a product, but holiness, self-control, courage, virtue, and wisdom do not, and searching for one can only lead to *aporia*. While analogies with *technai* are often employed in the pseudo-Platonica, as we have seen, Socrates_{ps} almost never uses them in this way or for this purpose. *Clitophon* may be the exception, where the central criticism in Clitophon’s attack on Socrates is that Socrates is unable to do anything more than produce a desire in his associates for justice, courage, virtue, etc. by leading them to a state of *aporia*.⁶⁹

In genuine Plato, *aporia* is intended to have the positive effect on Socrates’ interlocutors of removing their *doxosophia*, literally “apparent (i.e., not real) wisdom,” the condition in which one thinks that one knows what one does not. That goal is one clear purpose (though not the only one) behind Socrates’ interrogation of Alcibiades in *Alcibiades*: at the dialogue’s mid-point (118a15–c2), Alcibiades is made to see that ignorance in the highest degree dwells with him; he ends (135d7–e5) by stating his conviction that thenceforth, with the support of Socrates’ *erôs*, he must concern himself with “justice,” a promise about which Socrates is skeptical (e6–8). A similar effect is achieved in *Alcibiades* 11, with a little more elaboration, allusiveness and optimism:

67 See Müller 1975, 71–3 (with 71 n. 3 on the call in *Sis.* 391d4–5 to return to a failed investigation “some time later” as a common one in authentic aporetic dialogues; also Joyal 2000, 294, on *Thg.* 131a10); Dalfen 2005, 59; 2009, 41–2. For *aporia* accompanied by humiliation, cf. Alcibiades’ behavior in Aeschines’ *Alcibiades*, *SSR* VI A 47, 50–1.

68 E.g., *Alc.* 127d1–8; *Alc.* 11 139d9, 147e1–6; *Amat.* 135a1; *Hipparch.* 231c3–6; *Thg.* 128c7–8; *Iust.* 372a9–10, 373c1, e10; *Virt.* 376d13, 379a6. In *Dem.* 381a2–3, a4–5 and c4 it is Socrates himself who is in a state of *aporia*.

69 On *aporia* in *Clitophon*, see Slings 1999, 164–79.

Alcibiades II 150d6–e8: *Soc.*: I think that, just as Homer says that Athena took the fog away from Diomedes' eyes, "so that he could recognize clearly both god and man" [*Il.* 5.128], you too must first draw the fog, which is now with you, away from your soul, and only then apply the means by which you are going to recognize both bad and good. As it is, I don't think you would be able. *Alc.*: Let him take it away, whether he means fog or something else; for I am prepared not to avoid any of the commands that he gives me—whoever he is—if, that is, I am going to become better.

Clitophon declares Socrates' ability to bring associates to a state of *aporia* to be his most valuable quality (*Clit.* 410e5–6), since it clears the way for the next stage in their development. But this goal is less plainly in evidence in other pseudo-Platonica, where outcomes vary widely. In *Axiochus*, Axiochus recovers from his desperation over impending death; in *Eryxias*, Socrates paradoxically concludes that the wealthiest people are the most in need; in *Theages*, Socrates, Theages, and Demodocus agree that Theages should test the compliance of Socrates' divine sign while continuing his association with Socrates; and in *On Virtue*, Socrates "conjectures" (τοπάζω, 379c3) that people become good "by inspiration from the gods" (ἐπιπνοίᾳ ἐκ τῶν θεῶν, c6, d1) and "by divine allotment" (θεία μοίρα, d10).

Despite this diversity of results, Socrates in many of the pseudo-Platonica manifests a "helping" or "improving" effect on his associates. This quality as it relates to Socrates_{ps} is by no means a novel one; indeed, it is one of the chief characteristics of Socrates_x.⁷⁰

Memorabilia 3.1.1: I shall now describe how he helped (ὠφέλει) those whose aspirations were noble by making them cultivate what they were aspiring for. 4.1.1: Nothing was more helpful (ὠφελιμώτερον) than association with Socrates and engagement with him, no matter where or in what circumstance.

And it seems to have been so for Aeschines' Socrates too, for whom improvement of Alcibiades (in this author's *Alcibiades*) is associated with *erôs*.⁷¹ For both Xenophon and Aeschines, the portrayal of Socrates' ability to help or improve his companions serves an apologetic function: so far was he from corrupting the young that he actually made them better. This function is the simplest

70 For "help" and "improvement" as thematic keys in the *Memorabilia*, see Erbse 1961, 266–84; Gray 1998, 10–11, 51–3, and *passim*.

71 See Döring 1984, 19–24; Joyal 1993, esp. 267–8; Tarrant 2012.

explanation for the theme's presence in most of the longer pseudo-Platonica as well. It is most explicit and most simply presented in *Theages*, where words or phrases denoting improvement and helping appear nearly twenty times in relevant contexts.⁷² Usually in the pseudo-Platonica, however, the theme occurs in connection with declarations about the soul. We have already seen (in the previous paragraph) that in *Alcibiades* II, Alcibiades will become better if the fog is lifted from his soul. According to Socrates in *Alciabides*, the person who loves Alcibiades' soul, unlike the one who loves his body, will not leave him so long as Alcibiades is improving (131c11–d2); and improvement depends upon “caring for the soul” (132c1–2). Similarly in *Minos* 321c4–d10, it is a source of shame that we know what needs to be applied to the body in order to improve it but are unable to say what should be applied to the soul to make it better (cf. *Ap.* 29d7–e3). The course of argument in *Amatores* 133d5–135a5 is more intricate, but the point is the same: we know who can tell us about the amounts of training and food that are “most helpful” (134d2) for the body, but we do not know whom to consult about the health of the soul. The most straightforward contexts are in *Clitophon*, where “Socrates” (i.e., the character conjured by Clitophon) repeatedly chides others for caring more about their bodies and other material things than for the welfare of their souls (407e5–408b5, 408e3–409a3, 410c7–e3). The theme clearly appeared in Aeschines' *Miltiades* too.⁷³ But by far the most elaborate expression of Socrates_{ps}' “care of the soul” and ability to improve a person's condition is to be found in *Axiochus*, where Socrates performs the role of the soul's “physician” in relation to the “patient” who fears impending death.⁷⁴ If the evidence of Plato's *Apology* is to be trusted (29d2–30b4), “care of the soul” (ἐπιμέλεια or θεραπεία τῆς ψυχῆς) was a fundamental element in Socrates' philosophical activity.

While Socrates_{ps} elevates “authorities” of various kinds and at different times, and does not profess any special ability to help his associates, in the eyes of others he himself deserves to be consulted. Indeed it is remarkable how often in the pseudo-Platonica Socrates is cast in the role of advisor or is concerned with the nature of advice and deliberation. The role of advisor is one that Socrates plays most prominently and most elaborately in *Axiochus*, a dialogue which by virtue of its genre as a *consolatio* is especially well suited to presenting him in this way. At the beginning of *Alcibiades* II, Alcibiades appears with a sullen, downcast look (138a4–5); near its conclusion, he expresses his gratitude to Socrates for advising him so well (151a7–b1). Socrates

72 See Joyal 2012, 335–7.

73 Cf. *SSR* VI A 77.6–12; see Slings 1975, 305–8.

74 For the details, see Joyal 2005, 104–10; Männlein-Robert 2012, 31–8, 102–10.

is sought out for his advice in *Theages* by the concerned father Demodocus, and he mediates a dispute between Demodocus and Theages; shortly after the dialogue's outset Socrates declares that "advice (συμβουλή) is a sacred thing" (122b1–2).⁷⁵ In *Sisyphus* Socrates devotes the entire investigation to the subject of "deliberation" (τὸ βουλευέσθαι; cf. esp. 387c6–d8). In *Demodocus* 1, "advice" (συμβουλή) is the monologue's chief concern.⁷⁶

4 Conclusion

Socrates' role as advisor and his interest in the concept of "advice" in the pseudo-Platonica should be taken together with some of his other characteristics in these works: his rapid establishment of and persistent focus on the dialogue's main question; his frequent monologues; the didactic posture in general which he sometimes assumes; and the relative certainty, even complacency, with which he brings many of the pseudo-Platonica to a close. In these traits we can identify the emerging outlines of what would become a powerful inclination to treat Socrates less as an aporetic inquirer and more as the wise man and moral *exemplum* that he became for much of the remainder of antiquity.⁷⁷ These outlines coexist beside (sometimes even to the point of incompatibility with) the dominant features of Socrates_{ps}, most prominently his insistence on questioning, his search for definitions, his expressions of ignorance, his reliance on shared inquiry and, perhaps above all, his erotic interests.

How, then, are we to answer the question which forms the title of this paper? By now it should be clear that the binary choice which Dorothy Tarrant contemplated—Platonic Socrates, or Socratic Socrates—is inadequate for our purposes. Socrates_{ps} is multiple characters, not one, and the product of several minds. These Socrates-characters represent stages in the long evolution of a literary persona, or moments in a literary development in which traditional features are integrated or set aside, and new ones adopted or invented. The authors of the pseudo-Platonica followed the examples of Plato and Xenophon by concentrating upon what they considered important and attractive in their presentation of Socrates. What we consider to be Socratic in the pseudo-Platonica rests on awareness of a tradition which is known to

75 See Joyal 2000, 12–13, 17–18, 2012, 326, 331–2.

76 See Müller 1975, 107–17, 120–3 (with reference especially to *Demodocus* 1); Neuhausen 2010, 9–13, 78–9.

77 See Döring 1979, esp. his introductory survey at 1–17.

us imperfectly, and which was in a constant state of development. The many features of Socrates_{ps} that we are able to recognize as familiar may provide the sense of satisfaction and comfort that comes from successful classification, but progress in the study of this character also requires us to challenge our assumptions by following wherever else the evidence takes us.

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Epicurus and the Epicureans on Socrates and the Socratics

F. Javier Campos-Daroca

1 Socrates vs. Epicurus: Ancients and Moderns

According to an ancient genre of philosophical historiography, Epicurus and Socrates belonged to distinct traditions or “successions” (*diadochai*) of philosophers. Diogenes Laertius schematizes this arrangement in the following way: Socrates is placed in the middle of the Ionian tradition, which starts with Thales and Anaximander and subsequently branches out into different schools of thought. The “Italian succession” initiated by Pherecydes and Pythagoras comes to an end with Epicurus.¹ Modern views, on the other hand, stress the contrast between Socrates and Epicurus as one between two opposing “ideal types” of philosopher, especially in their ways of teaching and claims about the good life.² Both ancients and moderns appear to agree on the convenience of keeping Socrates and Epicurus apart, this difference being considered a fundamental lineament of ancient philosophy. As for the ancients, however, we know that other arrangements of philosophical traditions, ones that allowed certain connections between Epicureanism and Socratism, circulated in Hellenistic times.³ Modern outlooks on the issue are also becoming more nuanced.

- 1 DL 1.13 (Dorandi 2013). An overview of ancient genres of philosophical history can be seen in Mansfeld 1999, 16–25. On Diogenes’ scheme of successions and other late antique versions of it, see Kienle 1961, 3–39.
- 2 According to Riley 1980, 56, “there was a fundamental difference of opinion concerning the role of the philosopher and his behavior towards his students.” In Riley’s view, “Epicurean criticism was concerned mainly with philosophical style,” not with doctrines (which would explain why Plato was not as heavily attacked as Socrates). Kleve 1983, 231, goes a step further: “The Epicurean philosopher is *in every respect the reversal* of Socrates” (my emphasis).
- 3 Gigante 1992, 11–20, was inclined to think that traditions linking Epicurus with Antisthenes were obliterated by the prevailing historiographical scheme, according to which Stoicism was tied to Socrates via Antisthenes and the Cynics. An alternative historiographical scheme distinguished ten (or nine) ethical sects (ἀρέτταις), the Epicureans among them (DL 1.13–21). Since Socrates was generally celebrated as the “inventor” of the ethical part of philosophy, Epicureans were given some sort of Socratic ascendancy; see Giannantoni 1987, 203. See below n. 7.

There is, to be sure, a constant of bitter criticism against Socrates in the Epicurean school, probably starting with Epicurus himself, which tends to focus on specific features of Socrates' demeanor. Yet the idea of a "fundamental difference" between both philosophers should be qualified. To begin with, Socrates was certainly not the main target of Epicurus, other philosophers and schools being more prominent as professional rivals. Furthermore, even when he was singled out by the heirs to Epicurus, the criticism leveled at him was actually meant to attack more serious philosophical opponents.⁴ As for philosophical styles, Michael Erler has recently shown that some of the most characteristic traits of Epicurus' self-portrait as a philosopher bear comparison with those associated with Socrates. To be more precise, there is a Socratic twist in Epicurus' claims to being an autodidactic and original thinker, as well as in his ways of freely adapting others' doctrines, as long as coherence and consistency with one's own are not thereby compromised.⁵ Finally, a close reading of the evidence reveals changes and subtleties in the Epicurean reception of Socrates that occasionally result in a more understanding or even positive view of him.⁶

In this chapter we will go through the textual evidence that attests explicitly to the reception of Socrates throughout the history of the Epicurean school, without much regard to the vexed question of the "historical Socrates" (and his more or less reliable sources), which haunts the studies of Socrates' reception. Our position on this basically irresolvable issue consists in essaying an ancient way to get to grips with the fact, perfectly known to ancient writers, that Socrates gave rise to as many versions of his teaching as he had

4 Long 1988, 156, sees in the paradigmatic role of Socrates for Stoics and Academics the basis of Epicurean criticism of Socrates; see §3 below. Recent overviews of the reception of Socrates in the Hellenistic age can be found in Erler 2003; Ranocchia 2007, 116–33.

5 Erler 2013, 17 and 21–2 (see also §3 below). Gill 2006, 100–22, makes out a case for the Epicureans defending "a version of psychological and psycho-physiological holism combined with Socratic ideals." On teaching techniques, see Glad 1995, 120–2: "The wise Epicurean is then *not* in every respect the reversal of Socrates" (my emphasis). Long 1988, 155, remarks that "the business of curing people's souls" was common to both Socrates and Epicurus, and recently Tsouna 2009, 264, considers that the parrhesiastic exchanges characteristic of Epicurean therapeutic practices come "surprisingly close to the paradigm of engaging in dialogue"; see below n. 50 on philosophical frank speech. Concerning his account of happiness, Irwin 1983 argues that Socrates is closer to Epicurus than to his own disciples.

6 The necessity of a reassessment of the evidence and a more balanced reevaluation of the issue received forceful articulation by Acosta Méndez and Angeli 1992. Similar suggestions had already been made by Long 1988, 155. That many references to Socrates in Philodemus were not hostile was acknowledged by Riley 1980, 59 and n. 12, but he did not discuss them.

disciples.⁷ We dare term this approach “dialectical,” to differentiate it from the “historicist” variety so familiar to us.⁸ This approach allows us to distinguish between different “versions of Socrates,” but not in order to contrast a “real” or “historical” Socrates with a subjective or partisan one, or to promote one source as the most trustworthy one with the aim of recovering what Socrates actually said or thought. At most, it allows us to differentiate a more reliable Socrates from a less trustworthy one by virtue of a criterion, such as agreement between authorities or closeness to the master.

As for the Socratics, we are interested in the ways association with Socrates was understood by Epicureans from the vantage point of their own school. The term “Socratics” is used today for all intents and purposes to refer to the followers of Socrates who regularly kept company with him and eventually wrote about him, thus creating the intellectual and social medium in which the new genre of the *logoi Sôkratikoî* flourished. Nevertheless, it is difficult to ascertain the name this rather informal and fluid group of people were given by their contemporaries. In any case, there is no clear evidence that they were called “Socratics” (Σωκρατικοί) as a group, at least not before late in the fourth century. Epicurus and his followers met (and contended with) the second and third generation of “Socratics,” who extended Socratic enlightenment and in some cases consolidated it into rival ethical stances (αἱρέσεις), which were eventually assigned specific denominations. It is probably in this context that the use of the term “Socratic,” referring to a specific brand of philosophers, was first coined, conveying the idea of an original connection with Socrates.⁹ An Epicurean author, Idomeneus of Lampsacus, was among the first authors who provided evidence for this (see §3 below). Two centuries later, another Epicurean philosopher attests to the use of this adjective, capturing the sense of a “Socratic tradition” handed down in the form of an “ideal” succession. What is more, he devoted a whole book to the Socratics in his monumental history of philosophy, thus putting them on a par with the rest of the schools (see §5.4). All in all, the Epicurean tradition presents us not only with original

7 Cf. Cic. *De orat.* 3.16, 61–17, 62, D. Chrys. *Or.* 54.4, Aristocles fr. 1.4 Chiesara, Origen *C. Cels.* 3.12, August. *De civ. D.* 8.3, Isid. *Pel. Epist.* 4.54. The differences between Socrates’ followers were considered the matrix of the manifold schools which then flourished in Hellenistic times, so becoming the rationale behind the works called *On Sects*.

8 Dorion 2011 and 2013, 1–26; Narcy 2016, 399–408.

9 In coming up with the names for philosophical schools, ancient authors regularly used the suffix -ικός for names derived from places or practices (e.g., Ἀκαδημαϊκή, Κυρηναϊκή, Κυνική). When it came to names derived from the founding fathers, the usual practice was to resort to the suffix -εῖος (e.g., Ἐπικούρειοι, Πυθαγόρειοι, Ἀντισθένηιοι). The unexpected use of Σωκρατικοί referring to “those closely connected with Socrates” shows that the expression was coined not to designate a school properly but a quality stemming from an association with Socrates.

perspectives regarding the reception of Socrates' figure in Antiquity, but also some glimpses of the historical conceptualization of his circle and its posterity.

2 Epicurus and Metrodorus of Lampsacus

Very little is known about Epicurus' appraisal of Socrates. When Epicurus arrived in Athens and settled there with his circle of the faithful (c. 307/6 BCE), Socrates was a well-known figure, but certainly not the most relevant for Epicurus' immediate concerns as a new competitor in the arena of philosophy.¹⁰ Nevertheless, perhaps at least three critical allusions regarding Socrates' style of teaching can be spotted in the fragments that remain of his copious production.

First, Cicero attests to Epicurus' disapproval of irony (Cic. *Brut.* 85, 292 = fr. 231 Usener) in keeping with his strictures on dissimulation, considered unbecoming to philosophers.¹¹ Irony, as an attitude of self-abasement associated with deception and dissimulation, was one of the faults Epicureans found with Socrates' demeanor (see §5.1). Yet, it is unclear whether Epicurus would have been specifically referring to Socrates here.

A second critique concerns Socrates' manners at dinner parties. Epicurus, in his book entitled *Symposium* (frs. 57–65 Us.), expressed himself in terms which may be interpreted as innuendos addressed to the Socrates as featured in Plato's and Xenophon's *symposia*. In that work, Epicurus considered talkativeness under the influence of alcohol improper for the wise¹² and lectured a group of youngsters at length on the dangers of giving in to desires after heavy drinking.¹³

¹⁰ Actually, it was the second stay of Epicurus in Athens, where he had previously spent two years for his ephebic service (325/4–324/3 BCE). For details of Epicurus' biography, see Erler 1994, 62–72; Goulet 2000, 157–68.

¹¹ Cf. Epicur. *Sent. Vat.* 54 and DL 10.117, with Acosta Méndez and Angeli 1992, 40–3. A similar rejection of irony as improper conduct in a teacher is expressed by Polystratus, the third head of the Epicurean Garden (*De contempt.* col. XVI 23–8 Indelli). See Nardelli 1984, 526–8, who links this criticism to the polemic against the Academy. See below, 245–7. Gigante (1992, 81–9) included the Cynics among Polystratus' polemical targets.

¹² DL 10.119 = fr. 63 Us. The MSS' verb τηρήσειν ("maintain") was replaced with ληρήσειν "chatter, talk nonsense" by Hermann, and accepted by Dorandi 2013. Bignone 2007, 884–7, thought that Epicurus was referring to the end of Xenophon's *Symposium*.

¹³ The extensive paraphrase of a discussion given by the physician Zopyrus on the appropriateness of sexual intercourse in banquets, as presented by Plutarch, shows that Epicurus strongly disapproved of this practice for health reasons (fr. 61–2 Us.). Phld. *De deis* 3 (*PHerc.* 152/157), fr. 76, pp. 66–7 Diels, took issue with the Stoics for giving love the dignity of virtue, and stated that "love is rather close to madness." Acosta Méndez and

Finally, the remains of a papyrus scroll dated to the late first or early second century CE (*POxy.* 5077) preserve three fragments of a collection of Epicurus' letters to and from his first followers (first edited by Obbink and Schorn 2011). We know that epistolary anthologies of this kind were in wide circulation up to late Antiquity and were of considerable importance to the upholding of bonds between Epicurean communities both doctrinally and emotively (cf. *Vit. Philon.* [*PHerc.* 1044] fr. 14.3–10 Gallo). The remaining columns enable us to read some fragments from three letters, at least one of them by Epicurus himself, although the other two may also be attributed to him with a certain degree of plausibility. A recent edition of the papyrus by Anna Angeli restores a text which in fr. 2 col. ii ll. 13–14 reads ἀν μὲν εἴπῃ<ι> τις 'τὸ τετρ[άγωνον σχῆμα] ἢ 'Σωκράτο[υς]' (Angeli 2013, 12–31, particularly 28–30). The passage under consideration deals with the role of figures (σχήματα) in the transition from experience to concepts, the crux of the matter being the role they play in determining the nature of justice (against those who defend the existence of "Justice in itself"). According to Angeli's tentative elucidation of this difficult piece of text, Epicurus is arguing that the word σχῆμα has a variety of meanings, depending on the noun that determines it. His point is that the mathematical meaning of the term "shape" in the expression "square shape" is different from its meaning in the expression "Socrates' shape," the latter referring to his peculiar ways of behaving.

To sum up, it appears—from the scarce evidence at hand—that Epicurus considered Socrates not a philosopher in his own right but an idiosyncratic character who appeared prominently in the writings of his followers, behaving in a way improper for a philosopher. The core of the criticism against Socrates is clear enough. He acted inappropriately in circumstances where a philosopher's demeanor, both verbal and corporal, really matters.¹⁴ All the same, Epicurus took an interest in the work of Socrates' followers and deemed them and their doctrines deserving of criticism.¹⁵

Angeli 1992, 37–8, surmise that Philodemus is here recasting arguments Epicurus used against Socrates.

- 14 See Riley 1980, 56–7 and n. 9. According to Philodemus (*Mor.* iv *PHerc.* 1050 col. 1.13–17), Epicurus turned to the "Socratic example" in his work *On Lives* ([10.2] Arr.), in order to support his definition of death as "deprivation of senses." The Greek text is severely damaged and the reading τὸ Σωκρά[τ]τειον results from a restoration by Vogliano and Diels, supported by Gigante 1983, 117 and 129 (who identified the passage alluded to as Pl. *Ap.* 40c), but the recent edition by Henry 2009 appears not to accept it. Socrates may be the philosophical rival in the Book 34 of *On Nature* (*PHerc.* 1431), where Epicurus deals with mental representations in dreams; see Leone 2002, 41–2.
- 15 Epicurus had first-hand knowledge of the Socratics' writings. In a polemical work addressed to certain heterodox school fellows, Philodemus excerpts passages from a

Epicurus met Metrodorus in Lampsacus, where he attracted a substantial number of faithful followers.¹⁶ Metrodorus then became one of his closest collaborators, and Epicurus had him appear as a research partner in some of his writings to discuss difficult doctrinal issues. As for Metrodorus' own works, we have a list of book titles but very little about their contents or stances. An *Against Plato's Euthyphro* is explicitly mentioned by Philodemus in his *On Piety* (col. 34, 958–60 Obbink, *deest* in Körte) and there is probably another allusion to this Platonic dialogue in the same work.¹⁷ Notwithstanding the poor state of the Philodemean passages under consideration, some glimpses can still be caught of the kind of criticism leveled by Metrodorus at Plato's portrayal of Socrates in this dialogue. Metrodorus made a point of criticizing Socrates' conduct in his conversation with Euthyphro, his seeking definitions (the well-known "what is x?" question), but the interesting fact is how he made his point. Metrodorus voiced some sort of reservation about the actual words Socrates uttered in the conversation as reported by Plato.¹⁸ As Obbink points out, Metrodorus' misgivings about the trustworthiness of Plato's depiction

letter of Epicurus in which the Master asked for Aristippus' *On Socrates* (Phld. [Ad Cont.] *PHerc.* 1005, fr. 111 Angeli) and Antisthenes' *Physical Book* ([Ad Cont.] *PHerc.* 1005, fr. 110 Angeli), a book that Epicurus knew well, cf. Phld. *Piet.* 1 col. 19.533–41, p. 143 Obbink, and *Piet.* 11 (*PHerc.* 1428) fr. 21 Gomperz; see Gigante 1992, 57–60. Cicero (*Nat. D.* 1.33, 93 = fr. 235 Usener) says that Epicurus attacked Phaedo the Socratic with disgraceful manners. According to DL 2.105, Phaedo initiated a line of succession that ended up in the Eretrian school after Menedemus (DL 2.105; see n. 32 below on Menedemus as a target of Colotes' attacks). Epicurus wrote a treatise (DL 10.27) against the followers of Euclides, the so-called Megarians (Erler 1994, 92) who, according to Diogenes Laertius (1.18–19), were also called "dialecticians" after Clinomachus took over the school; see, on the meaning of this scheme, Sedley 1977. The polemic against the Megarians/dialecticians also featured in Book 28 of Epicurus' *On Nature* (fr. 13 col. 4.8 *inf.*–col. 6.15 *sup.* Sedley; see Sedley 1972; Giannantoni 1983b; Erler 1994, 100–1), and was continued by Metrodorus, who wrote a book *Against Dialecticians* (DL 10.24). Some papyri from Herculaneum have been attributed to this tract (*PHerc.* 255, 418, 1084, 1091, and 1112; see Spinelli 1986). For the references to Megarians in Philodemus' *Rhetoric*, see Longo-Auricchio 1975. The hedonism of Aristippus' school of thought was considered inspirational for Epicurus, and their differences concerning the nature and varieties of pleasure were carefully set out as a sort of debate in doxographical sources: see DL 2.86–93. The notable diversification of Aristippus' philosophical heritage makes identifying the debate's contenders difficult; see Lampe 2015, 211–21, and below, n. 30. Regarding Epicurean polemics against the Cynics, see below, 243. For a thorough overview of the references to "minor" Socratics in the Papyri Herculaneenses, see Giannantoni 1983a; Dorandi 2015.

16 On Metrodorus' life, see Erler 1994, 216–22 and Dorandi 2005.

17 Phil. *Piet.* 1 col. 25, 706–8 Obbink, fr. 14 Körte. The phrase πρὸς Εὐθύφρονα τὸν Πλάτωνος refers not to Plato's *Euthyphro* but to the character who appears in the dialogue. On a competing construal of the text, see Obbink 1996, 383–4. For Metrodorus' anti-Platonic works, see Tepedino Guerra 2010.

18 Phil. *Piet.* 1 col. 25, 705–6 Obbink: εἴπερ ἐπόμεν τοῦτο (sc. Socrates); Obbink 1996, 377–89.

of Socrates suggest he may have been aware of a problem which may bear comparison with our “Socratic question.”¹⁹

Socrates’ heritage was not one of doctrines but of questions and problems, one of which concerned the acquisition of wealth (cf. Schaps 2011); the proper stance of a philosopher in this respect became a bone of contention between schools and eventually part of ethics in its own right. The extreme and even aggressive positioning of Cynics against any concern for property and provisions to earn a decent living was vigorously contested by Epicurus in his book *On Ways of Life*, in which the Master disallowed the Cynic way of life and called the practice of begging unworthy of a philosopher.²⁰ Following in the footsteps of Epicurus, Metrodorus developed a more articulate proposal in his books *On Wealth*, one we know thanks to the quotations from it that Philodemus, always respectful towards the revered masters, included in his own books on the issue (see §5.2). Metrodorus expanded on Epicurus “economic” views and prosecuted a similar line of argument against Cynic proposals of self-deprivation and indigence. In doing so he advanced the distinction between indigence and poverty and asserted the idea of “natural wealth” and a philosophically appropriate style of estate management.²¹

3 Idomeneus of Lampsacus

Also faithful to Epicurus’ fault-finding attitude towards Socrates was one of his first followers in Lampsacus, namely Idomeneus, who was said to have met Epicurus at the age of fifteen.²² The unique importance of Idomeneus in the history of Socratism stems from his one-volume book entitled *On the*

19 Obbink 1996, 386: “Metrodorus made the kind of distinction that we find only rarely exemplified in antiquity between the ‘real,’ historical Socrates and his dramatic portrayal or someone else.”

20 Epicurus *ap.* DL 10.119 = fr. 14 Us. Gigante 1992, 13–20, observes that this criticism is addressed both to Cynics and to Stoics (cf. *SVF* 111 fr. 38), and connects it with a set of *chrematistika dogmata*, such as those reported by DL 10.120–1; see also *SV* 41, 43, and 67. But Gigante also argues (47–54) that, notwithstanding the differences, there were fundamental affinities between Cynics and Epicureans concerning the value of the simple life and self-sufficiency. He stresses that the therapeutic inspiration was common to Epicurus and Diogenes, and, to a certain extent, quite similar to each other (60–70).

21 Gigante 1992, 36–43. The Cynics are mentioned in Philodemus’ *On Wealth* (*PHerc.* 163 col. 50.7 Tepedino), and Cynic positions are presented more extensively in his *On Household Management* (*PHerc.* 1424 col. 12.25–43 Ferrario). Tepedino identified the *subscriptio* of Metrodorus book in *PHerc.* 200 (1978, 55 n. 28).

22 Idomeneus’ life was divided between his devotion to Epicurus and a checkered political career: see Erler 1994, 234–40; Angeli 1981, 41–61. On his criticism of the Socratics, see Acosta Méndez and Angeli 1992, 46–52.

Socratics, about which very few details are known, though quite interesting ones nonetheless.²³ Five testimonies to the issues dealt with in this work have been provided by Diogenes Laertius and Athenaeus, who more probably than not did not have access to the original work. Thanks to them we can say that at least four *Socratics* (and Xanthippe) were mentioned by Idomeneus regarding some controversial details of Socrates' life and relationships.

To begin with, Diogenes Laertius mentions Idomeneus' book as a source for the startling report that Socrates was indeed a consummate rhetorician (ἐν τοῖς ρητορικαῖς δεινός, DL 2.19 = fr. 25 Angeli),²⁴ and he even earned a living from rhetoric in the company of Aeschines (DL 2.20 = fr. 24 Angeli). This piece of information flies in the face of the Platonic picture of an embarrassed Socrates adducing his lack of rhetorical expertise in front of the jury.²⁵

Two further testimonies from Diogenes Laertius concern antagonisms and rivalries arising between certain disciples of Socrates, namely Plato with Aristippus and Aeschines. According to Idomeneus, Aeschines was the actual partner in the conversation which took place with Socrates in jail about the appropriateness of fleeing, but Plato replaced Aeschines with Crito out of animosity towards Aristippus, with whom Aeschines was on friendly terms.²⁶ The last piece of evidence, supplied by Athenaeus, deals with the authenticity of Aeschines' writings, which Idomeneus exposed as being written by Socrates himself: Aeschines received Socrates' writings from Xanthippe after her husband's death, and then claimed them as his own.²⁷

At first sight, the quality and interest of the fragments from Idomeneus' treatise leave something to be desired. They attest to the fact that the book abounded in the sort of topics current at that time in the quarrels between

23 Angeli 1981, 56–61 and 92–3; Dorandi 2016. Another work with the title *On the Socratics* is attributed to the Peripatetic scholar Phainias of Eresos (flor. 317/18 BCE) by Diogenes Laertius (DL 6.8 = *FGrH* 1012 F11). Diogenes quotes Phainias once more about the Socratic Aristippus (DL 2.65 = F12, without referring the quotation to a specific work), singled out as the first of Socrates' followers to charge fees for his lessons; see Giannantoni 1987, 209–14.

24 According to Angeli 1981, 59, the rhetorical ability considered here was not "l'arte del dire," but the argumentative technique displayed in the Socratic dialogue.

25 The adjective δεινός features prominently at the beginning of Pl. *Ap.* 17a–b, where Socrates says that he is not δεινός λέγειν. Socrates' assertion of his inability to speak has been a hot topic of contention regarding the irony it might contain; see Leibowitz 2014, 21–37.

26 DL 2.60 (fr. 26 Angeli) and 3.36 (fr. 27 Angeli). In 2.25, Diogenes Laertius reports that Socrates told Aeschines that his death would take place in three days' time, cf. Pl. *Cri.* 44a–b and see Giannantoni 1987, 196–7.

27 Ath. 13.611d–c (fr. 28 Angeli). The same piece of information appears in DL 2.60 (= SSR VI A 22, just after fr. 26 Angeli) as stemming from Menedemus, see above n. 15 and below n. 32.

schools, where personal abuse, sometimes of a rather coarse nature, was not seen to be out of place. The real interest of the book lies in the fact that it provides us with one of the first attestations of the expression “the Socratics” to mean the circle around of Socrates. Furthermore, the troubled relationships and deceitful maneuvers guided by envy, and an almost factional rivalry which Idomeneus considered a trait of the Socratic circle, contrasted sharply with the peaceful and collaborative ways of the community gathered around Epicurus.²⁸ Idomeneus’ remarks about the way Socrates and his disciples earned their living may well be interpreted not only as in contesting Plato’s sanitized version of a Socrates unconcerned with resources, who fell victim to sophists, corrupt politicians, and a prejudiced crowd, but even as a fundamental disqualification of him as a master whose means of living are completely at odds with the kind of “serene” relationship he should ideally be promoting among his followers. This circumstance also impinges on the reliability of the portrayal of Socrates by his intimates.

The polemical slant of Idomeneus’ presentation of the Socratics may depend on the fact that the “school culture” fostered in the contemporary Academy was significantly influenced by Socratic ideals of close relationships as a condition for successful philosophical learning. Harold Tarrant (2013) has recently delved into this peculiar Socratic bent of the “Polemonian Academy,” where some minor dialogues, which would eventually find their place in the *Corpus Platonicum* (*Theages* and, most importantly, the two *Alcibiades*), are to be located. Idomeneus’ slanderous remarks on the rivalries between Socrates’ faithful followers could be interpreted as a vehement debunking of the image that the contemporary Academy promoted of itself.

4 Colotes of Lampsacus

An important and much better documented episode in the Epicurean reception of Socrates took place towards the end of the first half of the third century BCE

²⁸ A passage from Philodemus’ *On Household Management* provides us with an illustrative reflection of Epicurean ideals of philosophical life in the context of the philosopher’s maintenance: “The first and noblest thing is to receive back thankful gifts with all reverence in return for philosophical discourses shared with men capable of understanding them, as happened to Epicurus, and, [moreover], discourses that are truthful and free of strife and, [in short], serene, since in fact the acquisition of an income through [sophistical] and contentious speeches is [in no way] better than its acquisition through demagogical and slanderous ones” (Phld. *Oec.* [*PHerc.* 1424] col. 34, 24–36, tr. Tsouna 2012).

with the philosopher Colotes of Lampsacus as its main character.²⁹ Although not ranking among the revered guides of the school (the *kathegemonēs* in the Epicurean parlance), Colotes still belonged to the inner circle of Epicurus' friends and exhibited an almost ecstatic admiration for the founder, at which his critics poked much fun.

As we know from the abundant quotations and reports by Plutarch, Socrates featured as a target of Colotes' vitriolic diatribe against all philosophers except Epicurus. Indeed, Colotes accused certain philosophers, Socrates included, of making life as we know it impossible, should we abide by their doctrines. Colotes proceeded to lampoon a series of renowned philosophers from the good old times, one after another (Democritus, Parmenides, Empedocles, Socrates, Plato, and Stilpo), following this up with further criticism of certain contemporaries, guilty of the same philosophical inconsistency (Cyrenaics and Academics).³⁰

In his censure of Socrates, Colotes resorted to two strategies. On the one hand, he heaped scorn on the famous Delphic exaltation of Socrates' superior wisdom as reported by Plato in his *Apology*, which Colotes found vulgar and sophistic to the extreme (*Adv. Col.* 17.1116E–F). On the other hand, in keeping with his general claims against the other philosophers under scrutiny, Colotes took Socrates to task for his pretentious discourses and his hypocritical behavior. Plutarch was not very explicit about what Colotes had Socrates say in this passage, but apparently the Epicurean found it outrageous that Socrates could express any reservations about the reliability of the senses, as if he

29 Erler 1996, 235–40. The literature on Colotes' writings is extensive; see the recent overview of his works by Kechagia 2011, 47–132. On Colotes' attack against Arcesilaus through Socrates, see Vander Waerdt 1982; Acosta Méndez and Angeli 1992, 55–91 (cf. also below n. 34).

30 Plutarch generally makes his departures from the order of Colotes' exposition explicit. Plutarch reverses the original sequence Parmenides–Empedocles (1113e–f) and Socrates–Plato (1114f), by reason of thematic coherence between the sections of Colotes' treatise. Plutarch reorganizes the sections into two groups according to two main headings: ontology and dialectics, which roughly correspond to physics and canonics in Colotes' outlook; see Kechagia 2011, 121–32, 137–40. By associating Socrates with Stilpo and the Cyrenaics, Plutarch apparently follows a pattern of differentiation between Plato and the "minor" Socratics not to be found in Colotes. Colotes' criticism of the Cyrenaics focused on their epistemological doctrines, according to which affections and impressions do not allow us any access to the external world. In [Phld.] *On Choices and Avoidances* (*PHerc.* 1251) col. 2–3 Indelli–Tsouna–McKirahan, the author contests the criticism of various groups of philosophers who presumably took Epicurean moral rationalism to task. As Indelli and Tsouna–McKirahan 1995, 20–3 and 118–26, suggest, certain skeptical sects (Pyrrhonians) and Cyrenaic philosophers (Hegesias, cf. *PHerc.* 1251 and Phld. *Rh.* 11 [*PHerc.* 1079] fr. 11) are alluded to here.

distrusted the evidence at hand (*Adv. Col.* 18.1117D). In the same line of attack, Colotes ridiculed Socrates' asking for the definition of "man" and his "immature swaggering" in saying that he did not even know himself.³¹ Generally, Colotes disparaged the conduct of Socrates as portrayed by the Socratics, mainly in some of Plato's dialogues. He labeled this behavior sophistic and characterized by a kind of pretense, rather close to the irony that Epicurus and his followers considered totally at odds with philosophical discourse.

Thanks to a few scraps of papyri from the Herculanean collection, we happen to know that Colotes "commented" on two dialogues by Plato in the same polemical vein, spotting some serious shortcomings in Socrates' style of argumentation,³² these being mainly related to what Colotes perceived as idiosyncratic uses of words.³³ Francesca Alesse (2003) has reassessed the evidence and put forward an overall interpretation of Colotes' works as anti-Socratic polemic, specifically regarding the mix of eroticism, friendship, and education characteristic of Socrates as portrayed both in Plato's dialogues as well as in writings of many others of Socrates' devoted followers.

Colotes' criticism of Socrates has attracted much scholarly attention, not because of its philosophical quality but as a testimony to the debate between Epicureans and Academics of the Skeptical persuasion, the latter a movement initiated by Arcesilaus.³⁴ According to a widely accepted version of the history

31 Plut. *Adv. Col.* 20.1118c. On this criticism and Plutarch's answers to it, see Moore 2015, 6–10. Moore rejects Pohlenz's supplement in the sentence μηδὲ αὐτὸς (αὐτόν) εἰδείη (accepted by many editors), such that the inquiry attributed to Socrates would actually be about the definition of man, not about self-knowledge, as the sentence is usually interpreted. In fact both questions coalesce in Plutarch's mind (21.1110e: διδόντες αὐτῷ τὸ μηδὲν οὕτως ἀχρηστον εἶναι μηδὲ φορτικὸν ὥς τὸ ζητεῖν αὐτόν), and even in modern research about the self: see Sorabji 2006.

32 *Against the Lysis* (PHerc. 208) and *Against the Euthydemus* (PHerc. 1032); see also Kechagia 2011, 59–68. Kleve 1983, 229, successfully christened these kind of works "anti-commentaries." The papyri were edited for the first time by W. Crönert (1906, 8–11), who spotted in them traces of a polemic against Zeno of Citium and Menedemus the Cynic (162–70). Crönert thought that the matter in contention was Epicurean ideas about poetry. The identification of the Menedemus mentioned at PHerc. 208 T7, pez. 11d.1–8 Crönert as the Cynic (see Crönert 1906) is contentious, but it has been decisively defended by Gigante 1992, 71–8; Menedemus the Eretrian (see above n. 15) has been proposed by Concolino Mancini 1976 and Alesse 2003, instead; the latter sees in the Socratic educational practices and their characteristic association of love and education the polemical target of Colotes' *Against the Lysis*.

33 These include Socrates' definition of "good poet" (PHerc. 208 T4, pez. 10b.1–14 Crönert—Pl. *Lys.* 206b) and the assimilation of good luck (*eutuchia*) to wisdom (*sophia*, PHerc. 1032, T3, pez. 7a.1–6 Crönert—Pl. *Euthyd.* 27a–d).

34 On Socrates' "rehabilitation" by Arcesilaus, see Long 1988, 156–60; Ioppolo 1995; Opsomer 1998, 83–105; Warren 2003; Cooper 2006; Levy 2006. Arcesilaus' re-establishment of

of the institution created by Plato, the scholarch Arcesilaus restored the figure of Socrates or, more precisely, Socratic dialectics to prominence in the Academy as a source of inspiration for the Skeptical orientation he gave to the school. Both Colotes' "anti-commentaries" and his book against the impractical philosophers were arguably intended for an attack on the Skeptical Academy of Arcesilaus, whose refusal of any possible degree of certainty had a prelude in Socrates' ways of inquiry.

5 Philodemus of Gadara

A philosopher and poet of Syrian origin and well-connected to the leading circles in late Republican Rome, Philodemus of Gadara provides us with the last and at the same time richest episode of the Epicurean reception of Socrates.³⁵ Philodemus studied in Athens and became a disciple of Zeno of Sidon, head of the school at that time.³⁶ For certain reasons about which we can only speculate, he moved to Italy and put roots down there for the rest of his life. His literary talent and philosophical expertise, along with his connections with members of the Roman ruling class, earned him well-known reputation regarding those matters.

From Philodemus' prolific production only a short collection of his epigrams were known until the second half of the eighteenth century.³⁷ Since then, the excavations at a luxurious villa in Herculaneum, preserved for centuries under

Socratic inspiration in the Academy both in the dialectical practices and the skeptical stance is well attested, cf. Cic. *Luc.* 5.14, 16; *Acad.* 1.12, 43–46; *De orat.* 3.67; *Nat. D.* 1.11. However, some features of the Platonic picture of Socrates were not well adapted to the skeptical turn, among them, precisely, irony; see Acosta Méndez and Angeli 1992, 67–8. This would make Colotes' renewal of the accusations of irony against Socrates particularly effective.

35 Erler 1994, 289–362; Longo Auricchio et al. 2012.

36 Erler 1994, 268–72; Acosta Méndez and Angeli 1992, 99–102. Edition of the fragments by Angeli and Colaizzo 1976. Zeno coined the successful nickname which Cicero translated as *scurra Atticus*, cf. Cic. *Nat. D.* 1.94 (fr. 9 Angeli–Colaizzo), Lactant. *Div. inst.* 3.20 (fr. 10 Angeli–Colaizzo), and Min. Fel. *Oct.* 38.5.

37 According to Sider 1997, 33–7, in the collection of epigrams attributed to Philodemus, a "philosophical" or "Epicurean" cycle can be distinguished, in which the author appears in the *persona* of a philosopher (or someone who tries to lead the life of a philosopher). Some are addressed or related to a woman called Xanthippe (1, 2, 3, 4, 7, II iv 1 Sider). "Xanthippe" serves as more than a mere filler; she exhibits the consistency of a character through the poems, performing the role of the sexual and philosophical partner of the poet. The presentation of a philosopher married to a woman named Xanthippe conjures up the memorable marital anecdotes of Socrates and, consequently, makes Philodemus

the ashes expelled by Vesuvius during the eruption in 79 CE, have brought to light significant remnants of his philosophical writings preserved in many carbonized volumes belonging to the library located in the villa. The state of preservation is rather poor for the greater part of the texts recovered and edited until now, but the contribution of this new material to our knowledge of the history of ancient Epicureanism is invaluable.

The importance of Philodemus' writings pertains not only to the information they provide about the tenets of the school to which he was so proudly attached but more significantly to the fact that they allow us to better assess the complexities of Epicurean tradition. Philodemus attests to the existence of sharp divisions among his fellow Epicureans in relation to different and even opposing ways of interpreting key points of doctrine in the works of the revered guides of the school. At the same time, as Gigante has eloquently put it, with Philodemus, Epicureanism opens itself up to the ideas and philosophical output of other schools, while Philodemus himself evinced interests and talents somehow at odds with Epicurus' advice to his disciples about the ideal disposition and aptitude for philosophy. Furthermore, Philodemus was indeed a gifted poet and devoted intensive work to the elucidation of literary issues such as the true nature of the effects of poetry and the possibility of regarding rhetoric as an art in its own right, locking horns with philosophers from other schools as well as his own. Conversely, he does not appear to be particularly inclined to deal with questions of *phusiologia*, although he was well acquainted with the topic from the most reliable sources possible.³⁸ In all his positioning Philodemus always presents himself as a faithful follower of the revered masters of old, casting out of the group those Epicureans of different persuasion as traitors to the school.

Philodemus' unique place in the history of Epicureanism makes his testimony to Socrates' reception in the school a particularly valuable one. For the first time, we can benefit from a perspective from within the school supported by substantial textual evidence (although very difficult to interpret on many occasions). This circumstance allows us to put to the test the continuity of Epicurean criticism of Socrates and the eventual changes in the assessment of his figure, along with the interest he aroused in the school.

himself appear as a "Socrates" too. A late reception of this philosophical play can probably be found in Alc. *Epist.* 2.2.1–3 = fr. 142 Us.

38 Diogenes of Oenoanda considered the neglect of these studies a characteristic of Socrates and his followers, cf. fr. 4 II 1–9 Smith: τινές τῶν φιλοσ[όφων] | καὶ μάλιστα οἱ περὶ Σω|κράτην, τὸ δὲ [φυσιο]λογεῖν καὶ τὰ [μετέωρα] πολυπραγμ[ονεῖν] | περιττὸν φάσι[ν εἶναι].

5.1 *Socratic Scurrilias*

Regarding the continuity of Socrates' negative portrait in Epicureanism, Philodemus provides a most interesting piece of evidence in his book *On Arrogance* (Περὶ ὑπερηφανίας), which was the tenth in a multivolume work devoted to the nature of the vices, their therapy and possible cure, and their corresponding virtues. The complexities of the text, in a poor state of repair, are aggravated by the fact that, in the passage under consideration, Philodemus quotes extensively from another philosopher named Ariston (whose identity is still under debate), with whom he does not totally agree but whose writings he still considers useful for his own philosophical inquiries. Here Socrates is put forward as an exemplar of traits of character associated with a vice heavily criticized as antisocial.³⁹

As reported by Philodemus, Ariston tackled the issue in two steps. First, he described arrogance as a “focal vice”: a distinct disposition of the soul associated with a set of attitudes or beliefs as well as behavioral patterns. Second, he explored a rich constellation of vicious dispositions with arrogance at their center. In this family of related flaws, each one appears as a specific “blend” in which arrogance reveals itself as a component of greater or lesser relevance.⁴⁰ In this section, Socrates turns up as the paradigmatic figure for the *eirôn*.⁴¹

The first sentence of the section devoted to the ironic variety of arrogance (the largest one in this part) introduces the ironic person as “by and large, a species of the pretentious person (ἁλᾶζων).”⁴² The pair *eirôn* and *alazôn* (together with buffoonery, βωμολοχία) were standard terms of abuse in Old

39 The standard edition of Philodemus' *PHerc.* 1008 has been until recently Jensen 1913. However, the Ariston section (cols. 10–24) has been edited twice recently. Ranocchia 2007 provides the edition with a thorough commentary and an extensive introduction; he defends the assignment of this section to the Stoic philosopher Ariston of Chios rather than the Peripatetic Ariston of Ceos. As fragments of a work by Ariston of Ceos, the columns have been edited and translated by Stork et al. in Fortenbaugh and White 2006, 66–113.

40 If arrogance is “focally” understood as a disposition basically characterized by pride and disdain, coming from a blind belief in one's own superiority in some regard, then the ironic man is convinced of his own superior intelligence and wits; see Tsouna 2007, 143–62.

41 See Kleve 1983, 244–49. Cf. Phld. *Vit. x* (*De arr.*) (*PHerc.* 1008), col. 21.38–23.37 Jensen (Aristo of Ceos, fr. 211–211 Stork et al.). The literature on ancient irony and its adaptations and changes is extensive; see Bergson 1971. On its association with Socrates, see Opsomer 1998, 106–126; Ranocchia 2007, 108–16, and 2009. Allusions to Socrates start at col. 21.1–39, in a section devoted to the arrogance of those affecting solemnity (σεμνόκοπος), in which Aristophanes is quoted (*Nub.* 362, cf. Pl. *Symp.* 221b3–4).

42 Phld. *Vit. x* (*De arr.*) (*PHerc.* 1008) col. 21.38–39 Jensen (Aristo of Ceos, fr. 211 Stork et al.).

Comedy, with which Socrates was famously showered on stage.⁴³ In the *Ethics*, Aristotle elaborates the connection between the two traits as a polarity of vices regarding sociability, the virtuous middle being described as a sort of “forthright” man (αὐθέκαστος τις) who always speaks truthfully (ἀληθευτικός) about himself (*Eth. Nic.* 1127a23–26). Correspondingly, *eirōneia* becomes the vice of speaking about oneself in a self-deprecating way, pretending to be less worthy than one actually is. However, Aristotle, who mentions Socrates as an example of ironic behavior, concedes some privileges to irony, which he deems closer to the virtuous disposition than its opposite (1127b22–32), and even on occasions more appropriate in certain social settings.⁴⁴

Contrary to the master’s appreciations, Aristotle’s followers were not inclined to think of *eirōneia* very highly. Nothing complimentary remains in Theophrastus’ treatment of the *eirōn*, and even more derogatory terms were applied to the father of philosophy by other personalities associated with Aristotle’s school.⁴⁵ In his description of the ironic man, Ariston does not distinguish between the vices of boastfulness and self-abasement, which Aristotle treats as being opposed to each other.⁴⁶ In Ariston’s treatment of the ironic man, this trait boils down to a crooked dissimulation of what one has in mind by means of saying something different, even the opposite. Such a strategy is facilitated by a generous provision of ingenuity in fabrication and persuasiveness. As a sort of boasting, irony becomes an indirect way of stating one’s own superiority: an oblique form of arrogance.⁴⁷

Ariston’s picture of the *eirōn* portrays a rich mixture of comic and Aristotelian material (without Aristotle’s leniency toward the Socratic variety of irony). Ariston notionally defines irony in relation to other vicious traits of character and singles out the specificity of the *eirōn*, defining him as the person who “praises whom he censures, and diminishes himself and those like him.” In this

43 Ar. *Nub.* 102, 443–51. In the latter passage, *eirōn* appears along with *alazōn* in a row of deprecatory qualities Strepsiades is ready to learn in the Socratic school.

44 Occasionally irony suits the “great-souled man” (μεγαλόψυχος), *Eth. Nic.* 1124b26–31. Conversely, Aristotle acknowledges that an exaggerated “irony” can be very close to a boast, cf. *Eth. Nic.* 1127b26–9.

45 Cf. Theophr. *Char.* 1; see the commentary by Diggle 2004, 166–80. Theophrastus’ *eirōn*, except for the first paragraph of the chapter (athetized by Diggle), has very little in common with the arrogant type sketched by Ariston.

46 Ariston’s disregard of Aristotle’s distinctions and nuances in dealing with *eirōneia* has been adduced as a reason for assigning the work quoted by Philodemus to the Stoic philosopher Ariston of Ceos; see Ranocchia 2006, 246–8.

47 That boastfulness (in the form of μεγαληγορία) belongs to the most characteristic traits of the “historic” Socrates and features prominently in the debate about Socrates’ condemnation has been convincingly argued by Danzig 2010, 19–68.

portrayal, Ariston subsequently resorts to a kind of Theophrastean *florilegium* of tags and gestures in order to illustrate the strategic behavior to be expected from the ironist in his deceitful pretense of ignorance and insignificance. In some cases, the distinctive expressions and actions are described in a rather general way, but in some others, they are worked out as “typical scenes,” with the words reported in direct style as if they were tokens of real speech.

Many of these scenes bring to mind expressions and idioms attributed to Socrates as portrayed by some of his disciples (mainly Plato and Xenophon). Philodemos/Ariston himself makes it clear at the end of the section, by saying that there is no need for further illustration of the topic, referring the reader to “the whole of the Socratic reminiscences” (Phld. *Vit.* 10 [*PHerc.* 1008] col. 23.35–7, p. 41 Jensen). Interestingly enough, as far as we know, there are few quotations from the “Socratic reminiscences,” strictly speaking. They are inspired by recurrent situations considered representative of the character under scrutiny but reworded in a way that conjures up images of caricatures, combined with some material which is not specifically associated with Socrates in our sources.⁴⁸ Socrates’ controversial disavowal of knowledge is sketched out simply as typical situations in which, for instance, someone praises our man and asks him to say something, or some people foretell a lasting memory of him, and the latter retorts: “Why, what do I know except this, that I know nothing?” and ‘What does our (opinion) count for?’ and ‘If indeed any will remember us’” (Phld. *Vit.* 10 [*PHerc.* 1008] col. 23.21–5 Jensen). While it is not difficult to spot the Platonic allusion in the avowal of ignorance, it is not so easy to say what is characteristically Socratic in the meek comment about a future where no memory of him remains. In the terms of Gérard Genette, we might consider the referral to the indefinite corpus of “Socratic memories” as a “nebulous hypotext,” a category cursorily forged to describe the specific hypotextual working of mythology.⁴⁹

A remarkable feature of the treatment of the ironic man by Ariston is the relevance of verbal behavior in this characterization. In no other case among the varieties of arrogance (not even in arrogance itself) adduced by Ariston are verbal behavior and bodily gestures so closely linked as in the *eirôn* and his malicious bearing so strongly redolent of Socrates.⁵⁰

48 Cf. Büchner 1941, 352, who remarked that Philodemos’ portrait of the *eirôn* is close to Plutarch’s “adulator.”

49 Genette 1997, 438 (ch. 10 n. 4).

50 Much debated is a passage from Philodemos, *Lib. Dic.* (*PHerc.* 1471), fr. 26 Konstan et al., where irony is apparently considered as a part of “caring admonishing.” Gigante 1983, 81, saw here a revaluation of Socratic irony (see also Nardelli 1984). Acosta Méndez and Angeli 1992, 105–7, thought that the irony mentioned here is not the Socratic variety so

5.2 *Socrates' Economics*

The bulk of the evidence concerning Socrates in the corpus of Philodemus' writings comes from the ninth volume of the work *On the Vices*, generally known by the title *On Household (or Estate) Management*, which translates the standard title *Περὶ Οἰκονομίας*.⁵¹ As the translation makes clear, ancient "economy" was almost exclusively "familial/domestic economy," and dealt with matters such as acquisition and expenses, estate management, accumulation of wealth, and the supervision of domestic life as a whole, all of them responsibilities of the married man as the head of the family and as a citizen.

The reasons such matters were a concern for philosophers and, more startlingly, for those inquiring about the nature of vice and virtue depends on the specific conditions and forms of production and circulation of goods in the ancient world. However, it is fair to say that they are also related to the astonishing way Socrates' disciples portrayed him as behaving towards the issues related to daily sustenance, acquisition, and, most importantly, wealth. Socrates' attitudes and questioning of his fellow citizens in this respect demonstrated that the quest for wisdom and happiness could well be at odds with the common sense regarding wealth and material prosperity as the most desirable things.

Philodemus' book on economic matters consciously falls in line with a consolidated tradition of philosophical writings on the issue, whose origins date back to the Socratic school and its ways of questioning the tense relationship between wealth and the philosopher's life. In the preserved part of this treatise, two sections are neatly distinguished by the author. In the first, he comments closely on two of the main representatives of ancient economic literature, Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* and the pseudo-Aristotelian *Oeconomica*, which Philodemus attributes to Theophrastus. Philodemus pays them the homage of a thorough criticism, bitterly censuring both their general theses as well as specific proposals and guidelines. In the second section, Philodemus puts forward his own views about how the Philosopher (meaning the Epicurean one) should deal with income and maintenance appropriately, in keeping with the views of the Guides. To this end, Philodemus tries to strike a balance between the mild asceticism of Epicurus and his strictures to wealth,

heavily criticized in *On Vices* but the elegant demeanor so appreciated by Cicero and Atticus (cf. *Brut.* 85, 292, and *De orat.* 2.67, 270). The affinities and differences between Epicurean and Socratic appreciation of frank speech as a requirement for an effective teaching in philosophy have been shown by Erler 2010.

51 We follow the recent edition by Voula Tsouna (2012), based on the text of Jensen 1906, but improved with new readings and punctuation.

together with Metrodorus' allowances on the matter, more in tune with the rather affluent entourage and company he was enjoying in Italy.⁵²

Philodemus' criticism against Xenophon's dialogue deals specifically with Socrates' and Ischomachus' parts in the conversation, but the one played by Socrates receives special attention in the following respect.⁵³ Philodemus takes Socrates to task mainly for his improper ways of leading a philosophical exchange: his lack of clarity confuses the interlocutor. Socrates distorts the ordinary meaning of key words, such as "possession," "slave" and "master," "poor" and "rich," thus altering well-established usage conforming to shared preconceptions. In the Socratic parlance, the vices are the "cruellest masters" and those who fall victim to them become their "slaves." In the same vein, Socrates induces Critoboulos to accept that it is possible to "possess enemies," as long as one is able to profit from them. Last but not least, Socrates pretends to be "rich," despite his estate amounting to five minas at best, by reason of his limited desires, whereas the rich Critoboulos, with limitless desires, happens to be "poor." This practice is repeatedly described as an act of violence on the proper use of words. Socrates is bringing deceptive "opinions" into the dialogue, making clarification of the issue impossible. Philodemus likewise finds it scarcely acceptable that Socrates appears in the guise of a teacher regarding an area of expertise in which he acknowledges himself ignorant. This attitude amounts to a pretense of knowledge (*prospoiêsis*) that Philodemus disparages as a trait characteristic of the *eirôn*. He thinks that those endowed with expert knowledge have the ability to teach other people what they would not be able to find by themselves, but this is precisely what Socrates refuses to do in his conversation with Critoboulos.

After Socrates, any philosopher has to come to terms with the demands of virtue and the possibility that property (and all it involves) becomes an obstacle to leading the best sort of life. The eventual conflict is particularly disturbing for those who propose a conciliatory way of integrating the demands of the city with the duties of the philosopher, in the face of those who refuse any conciliation and put forward utopian worlds with radically new economies. Xenophon, whose authority in these matters is acknowledged by Philodemus, represents the conciliatory formula by means of a twofold approach. Socrates and his "teacher" Ischomachus introduce two successive and apparently opposed ways of dealing with estate management: Socrates goes for a moderate style based on prudent saving and a temperate mindset allowing him to be content with just a few things, while Ischomachos behaves in an ambitious

52 On Philodemus' adaptation of the Epicurean tradition in this matter, see Asmis 2004.

53 Kleve 1983, 238–42.

entrepreneurial manner with an eye toward building his estate. The apparent dissonance between the two types, which Xenophon seems to resolve in favor of the second, is in fact just that, apparent, since both proposals have a basic Socratic idea in common, namely, that property and wealth are valuable only by virtue of self-control (*enkrateia*). Philodemus, for the most part, agrees with this Socratic solution, but at the same time turns it on its head as he separates economics from philosophy. Contrary to Xenophon, Aristotle, and other “Socratics” like the Stoics, he does not expect virtue and expert estate management to coalesce in the philosopher.

5.3 *Exemplar Socrates?*

As stated above, recent research on the Epicurean reception of Socrates has uncovered a discrete but remarkable change of attitudes in Philodemus in relation to the hostile tradition starting with its founder. In some passages of his works, Philodemus appears to acknowledge the pedagogical achievements of Socrates, and even to concede some merit to his dialectical ways.⁵⁴ A recent overview by Diskin Clay of the references to Socrates’ trial and death in Philodemus’ writings provides us with quite an unexpected view of Plato’s master from an Epicurean perspective (2003, 89–100). In some of his works, Philodemus makes room for a milder stance on Socrates, considering him a virtuous sage who suffered, as many others did, from a misunderstanding of his way of life and the suspicion and hostility it aroused in his fellow citizens.⁵⁵

54 In a polemic with Diogenes of Babylon (whose views on Socrates are reported by Philodemus), Philodemus takes Socrates’ practice of discussion as an example of the search for truth that distinguishes philosophers from rhetoricians, who always speak to please the mob: see Phld. *Rhet.* 3 (*PHerc.* 1596) col. 5 (11 207 Sudhaus). Socratic dialectic is valued as a means of harmonization and concord: Phld. *Rhet.* 3 (*PHerc.* 1596) col. 18.9–18 (11 223 Sudhaus); see Brancacci 2011.

55 In *Rhet.* 4 (*PHerc.* 245) fr. 7 (11 180 Sudhaus), Philodemus lists his fate along with Anaxagoras’ and Pythagoras’ as instances of the cruelest persecution. In his book *On Death*, Philodemus mentions the unjust condemnation of Socrates along with Palamedes and Callisthenes, illustrating the sort of consolation available in these cases; see *Mor.* 4 (*PHerc.* 1050) col. 33.37–34.34, 78 Henry; further on, Philodemus enlists Socrates’ conduct as an example of bravery toward unmerited death (col. 35.11–34.80 Henry, where Zeno the Eleatic and Anaxarchus, “and others who practiced philosophy,” are mentioned for the exploit). There is another obscure mention of the accusation of Socrates, which may belong to the context of the quarrel between philosophy and rhetoric at *Rhet.* 3 (*PHerc.* 467) fr. 8 (11 286 Sudhaus). The practice of drawing parallels between Socrates’ fate and other philosophers’ is based on the resentment aroused in the city against them, and this can be traced back to Demetrius’ *Apology of Socrates*, cf. DL 9.15 (Heraclitus), 37 (Democritus), and 57 (Anaxarchus). In *Rhet.* 6 (*PHerc.* 1004) col. 41 (1 342 Sudhaus), Philodemus quotes a saying by Aristippus on the occasion of his being put on trial, if

In a passage of his *On Rhetoric*, Philodemus refers explicitly to Plato's *Apology* to mark the shameless conduct of those who accused Socrates of the greatest impiety. Philodemus considers his condemnation as a case against rhetoricians.⁵⁶

This positive assessment of Socrates goes hand in hand with some reservations. Epicurus himself would have suffered the same fate were it not for his retirement from all public affairs, which he himself wholeheartedly recommended.⁵⁷ Socrates' public performance of his philosophical mission left him exposed to attack by his enemies, who in the long run managed to condemn him to death (*Piet.* I col. 59.1674–701 Obbink). He was “the champion of philosophy defeated by rhetoric” (Clay 2003, 94); as Philodemus says: “his virtue was of no use to him.”⁵⁸

Notwithstanding all his precautions, Epicurus himself came under fire from his philosophical rivals for being an atheist. Philodemus found in Socrates some positive inspiration in defense of Epicurus, and his trial became the model for the “trial” of Epicurus brought about by his philosophical adversaries, and the parallelism between Epicurus and Socrates turns out to be quite useful for highlighting both their similarities and differences. In some passages from his work *On Piety*, Socrates' condemnation provides the blueprint for the fate of “the most educated men” who dare to spread their thoughts about the gods from goodwill towards their people.⁵⁹

5.4 “Historical” Socrates

Our “historical” Socrates is obviously not that of the historicist breed, but the Socrates who belongs to the ancient ways of understanding history, with which we started this chapter.

we follow the reconstruction and interpretation by Acosta Méndez–Angeli 1992, 160 and 254–60.

56 *Rhet.* 3 (*PHerc.* 467) fr. 8 (II 286 Sudhaus).

57 Epicurus is said to have been no cause of pain for anybody anyway, in contrast to so many philosophers who were denounced, exiled, and condemned to death (probably meaning Socrates here): *Phld. Piet.* I col. 53.1512–32 Obbink, and *Piet.* I col. 58.1645–59 Obbink.

58 *Rhet.* 7 (*PHerc.* 1669) col. 29–30 (II 265–67 Sudhaus). Acosta Méndez and Angeli 1992, 114, rebuild the polemical context against some rhetoricians, who discuss Socrates' fate as an example of the inefficiency of philosophy, and think that Philodemus nuanced his own complimentary judgment; Clay 2003, 94–5, thinks that Philodemus' portrait of Socrates on trial is uncompromisingly positive.

59 *Phld. Piet.* I col. 47.1338–63 Obbink; Clay 2003, 96–100. Socrates' thoughts about divinity are reported by Philodemus in *Piet.* II (*PHerc.* 1428) fr. 20 Gomperz; see also Kleve 1983, 242–4.

Philodemus was the first Epicurean to inquire extensively into philosophical schools other than his own without an outright polemical aim. Of course, concerns about the history of his own school of thought loomed large in Philodemus' mind, but a wider outlook (together with the peculiar new political and cultural environment for his activity) drove him toward a more ambitious ten-volume book entitled *Σύνταξις τῶν φιλοσόφων* (*Syntaxis*), variously translated as *Compendium* or *Index of Philosophers* (of which Diogenes Laertius made use, cf. DL 10.3).⁶⁰ With more or less conviction and agreement among scholars, several items from the library at Herculaneum have been assigned to this monumental piece of work. Recent research has been able to identify remains from books devoted to the history of the Academy, the Stoa, the Garden, the Lyceum, and the Pythagorean sect. Of greatest interest to our concerns, two extremely damaged papyri attest to the existence of work dedicated to Socrates and his students (which may be the remains from the "Socratic volume" of the *Index*, akin to the second book of Diogenes' *Lives*).⁶¹ Thanks to the thorough inspection of the papyri by Giuliano (2001), the lacunose fragments afford some glimpses of the contents and topics addressed by Philodemus in his account of Socrates and his followers. Philodemus' first concerns are related to Socrates' disciples and inner circle, particularly Xanthippe.⁶² Aeschines is a prominent figure, more specifically as a protagonist of anecdotes concerning his poverty and difficulties earning his living; as a way of remedying this, Socrates advises him to practice rhetoric (either as an orator or as a teacher).⁶³ Plato is also frequently mentioned, and

60 On Philodemus' historical production, see Dorandi 1990; Militello 2000; Clay 2001; Gigante 2002, 20–3; Arrighetti 2003; Longo-Auricchio 2007. The methodological convenience of keeping apart Philodemus' *Syntaxis* from the works devoted to his own school is a point generally agreed on. The significance of this ample historiographical interest as a symptom of a pivotal change in the history of Ancient philosophy has been remarked upon by Sedley 2003.

61 Erler 1994, 300–1, considers the ascription of both papyri to the *Syntaxis* doubtful, and puts forward other possible attributions (*Rhetorica*, *De divitiis*). Giuliano 2001, 45, states that both papyri were in fact copies of the same book, from the *Syntaxis* (43–4). This latter point has been questioned by Gallo 2002, 61–2, arguing that Socrates could not be considered the founder of a school and head of a proper succession, and so a book about the Socratics could not then follow the succession scheme. In answer to this, Longo-Auricchio 2007, 239, has pointed out that it should not be assumed that Philodemus followed the same methodology in every school dealt with in the *Syntaxis*. Also see for the ascription to the *Syntaxis* Arrighetti 2003, 15–22.

62 *PHerc.* 495 fr. 1, col. 1.5; *pez.* 14.2 Crönert.

63 *PHerc.* 495 fr. 3; *sott.* 2, col. 1.2?; fr. 6, col. 1.2–5.

special attention is paid to his travels to Sicily and his contacts at the court in Syracuse.⁶⁴ Xenophon is mentioned in connection with his travels to Asia.⁶⁵

As per the arrangement of the book's content, the ordering of topics by episodes in Socrates' life is recognizable, most notoriously in the cases of his trial, incarceration, conversations in jail, and finally death and burial.⁶⁶ Also significant is the wide range of sources that can be observed in the Philodemian account of Socrates and his lineage. For instance, Satyrus of Callatis is quoted concerning the trial of Socrates, using rather technical details of forensic vocabulary (*PHerc.* 558 fr. 1). In the broad sense of the term "sources," Plato's dialogues are put to extensive use, not only for the sake of the information they provide about the most distinguished moments of Socrates' life but also as testimonies to the language used in Socrates' talks. As is to be expected, Philodemus also avails himself of the evidence from the comic playwrights, Aristophanes' *Clouds* clearly recognizable in one of its exhilarating scenes.

Crucial to our assessment of the "Socratic book" of the *Index* are the (possible) references to Diogenes the Cynic, whose name and anecdotes can be spotted in at least two fragments.⁶⁷ If the identification of the philosopher is accepted, two important conclusions can be drawn. First, Philodemus would have offered a broader view of the range of personalities relevant to the Socratic "school," thus exploring certain successions which further extend the Socratic inspiration. Secondly, the reservations about integrating Philodemus' *On the Socratics* into the *Index*, because of the difficulty of considering Socrates' circle as a school with its own succession, would, as a result, lose strength. "Socratics" would then mean not only the circle of disciples directly related to the master, but also the main lines of continuation of his teaching that eventually gave rise to differentiated schools claiming Socratic pedigree for themselves. We know for certain that Philodemus was aware of this idea and its importance, since in a polemical book entitled *On the Stoics* the connection with Socrates

64 *PHerc.* 495 fr. 8, col. 2.9–10; fr. 9.5; fr. 10, col. 2.2 (an allusion to the *Republic*?); fr. 11.6; *PHerc.* 558 fr. 11, *sov.* 1; fr. 1.6; fr. 14; fr. 15, col. 2 *Crito* (?), *PHerc.* 558 fr. 1a, col. 3. Euclides (?) *PHerc.* 558 fr. 4 (cf. Gell. *NA* 7.10.1–4).

65 *PHerc.* 495 fr. 9.2–5; fr. 12, 4 (?); *PHerc.* 558 fr. 15 col. 1.1.

66 *PHerc.* 558 has been provided at some places with headings (*titulationes*) written in a type of writing different from the one used in the body text.

67 Cf. *PHerc.* 495 fr. 7.5–7 and *PHerc.* 558 fr. 2, col. 2.8; see Giannattasio Andria 1980, 151. Giuliano tentatively identifies additional allusions to Antisthenes and/or Diogenes at *PHerc.* 558 fr. 9, *sott.* 1; col. 1.8–9; fr. 11.2; *sov.* 1. Philodemus also pays attention to the Pythagorean bent of some Socratics, probably in connection with the Locrian Timaeus and his doctrines, *PHerc.* 558 fr. 6; fr. 9 col. 2.2.

via Antisthenes was mentioned in the context of the debate about Cynic influences on Zeno of Citium and his shocking early work entitled *Republic*.⁶⁸

Meager as the information supplied by the papyri in question may appear some interesting conclusions can tentatively be drawn about Philodemus' historiographical aims and achievements. In putting the Socratics on a par with the rest of the schools, Philodemus attests to an important change in the historical interpretation of the reception of Socrates. To some extent, Philodemus' Socratics are close to the historiographical concept we use to pin down the whole range of heirs to Socrates' teaching *and* their continuators.⁶⁹

6 Socrates the Epicurean and "Socratic" Epicurus

To our knowledge, the last episode of the Epicurean reception of Socrates and his circle is to be found in the second century CE. Therein, we attend to a bold appropriation of Socrates' figure for Epicurean polemical purposes in a quite unexpected context. Maximus of Tyre's *Oration* 32 is the third in a series of four speeches (30–33) devoted to assessing pleasure's candidacy as the ultimate goal in life. Across all four, the moral value of the pleasant life is judged by means of an analysis of human nature, in order to refute Epicurus. In *Oration* 32 Epicurus is allowed to articulate his opinion about the natural allure of pleasure and its spontaneous appeal to all kinds of sentient creatures. The oration begins with the telling of an Aesopic fable that, Maximus surmises, may be a fitting way of conveying Epicurus' judgment about the hypocritical attitude of those who condemn pleasure (§1–2). In the following paragraphs (§§3–6) Maximus produces some well-known tenets of the school in defense of pleasure as natural and universal. From §4 onwards, Maximus lets Epicurus himself speak for pleasure as the true goal of life. Virtue and Pleasure are so closely intertwined that it is impossible to deprive the first of the second without spoiling both, their close association bringing about perfect happiness (§5). The last part of the oration (§§6–10) presents us with an impressive array of examples, with the aim of supplying living, breathing evidence, both

68 *De Stoic.* col. 13.1–5 Dorandi. See Giannattasio Andria 1983; Goulet–Cazé 2003, 13–24. The papyri of Philodemus' polemical book *On the Stoics* has been edited by Dorandi 1982.

69 As a consequence, some amount of overlap with the history of the "Socratic" school is to be expected. In the *Index Academicorum*, Plato's relationship with Socrates is mentioned. Philodemus remarks that he was quite young when he "lost" his master at the age of 28. He then set off to Sicily where he contacted the Pythagoreans and "mixed" with Dionysius: *Ind. Acad.* col. 10.5–1 Dorandi.

mythical and historical, divine and human, for the practicality of the Epicurean ethical doctrines. The list begins with the exceptional case of Heracles, whose celebrated labors are a perfect demonstration of the kind of life advocated by Epicurus in Maximus' oration. In the example following, the appearance of Socrates as a devoted lover, between Heracles and Diogenes, comes as a bit of a surprise. Socrates' love affairs become a hedonistic lesson in the eyes of Epicurus, who reveals his own doctrines in Socrates' erotic behavior.

As far as we know, Maximus is the only author in antiquity who gives Socrates' erotic stories an Epicurean reading. However, in this peculiar dialectical twist whereby Maximus puts forward a fictional defense of Epicurus' faith supported by Socrates himself, some old material might possibly have been reworked to state the hedonist position. That Heracles' toils may have been a staple of Epicureans in defense of pleasures associated with virtue may be inferred from Cicero's reservation at the end of his refutation of Epicureans in *De Finibus* 11: "I would press my question and drag an answer from you were I not afraid lest you should say that Heracles himself in the arduous labors that he wrought for the preservation of mankind was acting for the sake of pleasure!" (*Elicerem ex te cogereque ut responderes nisi vereretur ne Herculem ipsum ea quae pro salute gentium summo labore gessisset voluptatibus causa gessisse diceret. De Fin. 2.35, 118, tr. Rackham*). As per Socrates, Cicero again gives us a clue, when in *Tusculan Disputations* 4 he surprisingly takes sides with Epicurus in rejecting love as a destructive emotion. In order to expose the real implications of the Stoic definition of love as *amor amicitiae*, which he considers erotic love in disguise, he wonders: "These say that the object of love is something other than illicit sex and argue the point with Epicurus, who in my opinion was not far from speaking the truth. For what do they mean by 'a love whose object is friendship'? Why does no one love either an ugly youth or a handsome old man?" (*Quis est enim iste amor amicitiae? Cur neque deformem adulescentem quisquam amat, neque formosum senem? Tusc. 4.70, tr. Graver*).⁷⁰ Maximus resorts to the same rhetorical questioning of his fictional rivals, with the aim of revealing the thoughts of a philosopher by pointing towards his acts. As a result, Socrates appears to be an Epicurean of sorts.

It is possible to go one step further and consider an even bolder appropriation of the Socratic ideal by the Epicureans. At the end of a recent overview of the Hellenistic reception of Socrates, Michael Erler eloquently argues

70 Thomsen 2001, 121–3, convincingly defends that the idea of *amor amicitiae* is Socratic, not only Stoic (see Stob. 2.7.11–72 (115.1–4 W.) and DL 7.130). Epicurus described *erôs* as "an intense desire for intercourse" (fr. 483 Us.).

that the exalted celebration of Epicurus' intellectual, moral, and religious achievements by Lucretius, in *De rerum natura*, was partly inspired by Socrates as a "proto-philosopher" in the Platonic tradition. Epicurus replaces Socrates (*Sokrates-Erstaz*) as the ideal of the wise man who has achieved the perfection of his human nature.⁷¹ In the glamorous evocation of that *Graius homo mortalís* who became *deus*, the paradoxical figure, both boastful and humble, of the Athenian from Alopece may be discerned as if it were a watermark.

7 Conclusions

Modern research on the history of Epicureanism and improved knowledge of Epicurean texts open up new insights into the reception of Socrates and his followers in the Garden.⁷² Two aspects of this reception deserve to be highlighted. First, Socrates's performance as a teacher and as a public figure was assessed, mainly with the ideal of the Epicurean sage as a foil. Generally speaking, derogative attitudes and judgments prevail, but there are testimonies to a more positive valuation of certain moments and significant actions in Socrates' life. Furthermore, in the long run, certain traits of the Socratic brand were integrated into the template of the Epicurean sage. Second, Socrates appears to be at the center of a philosophical community of people, which, once again, was contrasted with the sort of ideal society Epicureans built around the master. In both aspects of the reception, a certain evolution can be made out. Positive assessments of Socrates' performance are to be found late in the history of the school, mainly in the writings of Philodemus, while at the same time "the Socratics" as a community of philosophers gave way to "the Socratics" as a succession in the historiographical schemes that cropped up in the late Hellenistic Period.⁷³

71 Lucr. 5,7–12; Erler 2001, 224–7.

72 Contrast Döring's (1973, 5) damning indictment of the scarcity and low quality of Epicurean criticism of Socrates.

73 Christopher Moore has been a patient, perceptive, and rigorous editor. I am greatly indebted to him, as well as to David J. Konstan for his encouragement and insightful advice. I am also very grateful to Lucía Romero Mariscal and Juan L. López Cruces for their suggestions and support. Nicholas James Stevenson has been a resourceful linguistic advisor and an invaluable help through a long process of writing. The remaining errors and mistakes are my own.

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The Syncretic Socrates of Epictetus

Brian Earl Johnson

1 Socrates as Role Model

Near the end of the *Encheiridion*, Epictetus summons us to model our lives on Socrates. Epictetus is in rare form and one imagines that his student Arrian must have been transcribing furiously in order to capture Epictetus' incandescence:

Make up your mind, therefore, before it is too late, that the fitting thing for you to do is to live as a mature man who is making progress, and let everything which seems to you to be best be for you a law that must not be transgressed. And if you meet anything that is laborious, or sweet, or held in high repute, or in no repute, remember that now is the contest, and here before you are the Olympic games, and that it is impossible to delay any longer, and that it depends on a single day and a single action, whether progress is lost or saved. This is the way Socrates became what he was, by paying attention to nothing but his reason in everything that he encountered. And even if you are not yet a Socrates, still you ought to live as one who wishes to be a Socrates.¹

Ench. 51.2–3

Socrates is here established as a model for ethical action, a theme echoed throughout Epictetus' corpus. When we are about to meet someone held in high repute, Epictetus invites us to ask "What would Socrates do?" (*Ench.* 33.12; cf. 2.18.22). Of course, Epictetus grants that "the great and pre-eminent deed, perhaps, befits ... Socrates and men of his stamp" (1.2.33), but he also recognizes that Socrates' life represents a worthy role model for us all (4.5.1–2). "Epictetus will not be better (*kreissôn*) than Socrates; but if I am not worse (*cheirôn*), that is sufficient (*hikanon*) for me" (1.2.35–6).

¹ Translations of Epictetus are taken from Oldfather 1925 and 1928 although I have sometimes made them more literal. Translations from Plato are from Cooper 1997 and translations from Xenophon are from Tredinnick 1990.

Epictetus' admiration of Socrates has long been noted by readers of the *Discourses* and the *Encheiridion*. Adolph Bonhöffer, in his 1894 book, *Die Ethik des Stoikers Epictet*, characterizes Epictetus' Socrates as a "morally exemplary personality" (Bonhöffer 1996, 192). Robert Dobbin notes that "Socrates is cited more than fifty times in the *Discourses*; he is E's great personal exemplar" (Dobbins 1998, xvi). "Epictetus' Socrates," says Anthony Long, "is the Stoics' patron saint" (Long 2001, 2). Equally apparent is the fact that Epictetus' Socrates differs from the aporetic figure we comfortably conclude is the historical Socrates. Instead, Dobbin suggests, Epictetus' Socrates holds a number of views "we now regard as Platonic, including contempt for the body" (Dobbin 1998, xvi). Similarly, this Epictetan Socrates "is no ironist, no sharp talker, no gadfly or sting-ray, no lover or symposiast, or philosopher chiefly characterised by self-confessed ignorance" (Long 2001, 2).

Where scholars begin to diverge is how they evaluate Epictetus' use of Socrates, some finding it flat-footed, others creative. At the end of his brief comparison of Socrates and Epictetus, Tad Brennan raises "the possibility that the real Socrates [as opposed to the one in the Platonic dialogues] may have been just as repetitive and platitudinous, just as philosophically unfruitful, as Epictetus was" (Brennan 2006, 297). By contrast, Anthony Long takes a favorable view of Epictetus' use of Socrates. "If, as I think certain, Epictetus has reflected hard on the Socratic writings of Plato and Xenophon, what he culls from those writings is an ideal of the philosophical life, as he himself conceives of it ..." (Long 2001, 2). Hence, Long quite aptly subtitles his book on Epictetus *A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (Long 2002); therein, Long declares that Epictetus represents "the most creative appropriation of Socrates subsequent to the works of Plato and Xenophon" (2002, 94).

In the present chapter, my aim is to reconstruct Socrates as Epictetus understood him. I endeavor to be more descriptive than evaluative in the hopes that my description will be adaptive to the changing scholarly portrait of Socrates. Nevertheless, I take it as a maxim of any good account of a philosopher to make that philosopher as plausible as possible and I therefore strive to show how Epictetus' account is defensible. Thus, I shall approach Epictetus as Long does.

In the first part of this chapter, I will discuss Socrates' mission and philosophical method as conceived by Epictetus. Epictetus looks to Socrates as a role model for being a philosopher; his account weaves together material from Plato and Xenophon about the Socratic method and mission. Epictetus' Socrates also gives advice about how to live and this aspect of the account will rely more on Xenophon than Plato. I take that reliance to be part of Epictetus' syncretic approach. He appears to assume that both Plato and Xenophon are

historically reliable sources and so he tries to weave their accounts together into a consistent portrait. In the second half of this chapter, I will discuss Epictetus' use of Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and Plato's *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*. In each case, Epictetus extracts familiar philosophical and biographical details about Socrates but he also imports them into his own framework, many times to startling effect. The *Apology*, for example, supplies great insight into Socrates' station as a philosophical gadfly but Epictetus also interprets Socrates to be deliberately provoking the jury into a guilty verdict; as a result, Socrates commits a kind of Stoic suicide by means of the Athenian courts.

2 The Station of Socrates

Key to understanding Epictetus' account of Socrates is the characterization of Socrates' divine station (*chôra*). Epictetus relates Socrates' mission to two other exemplars, Diogenes of Sinope, the Cynic, and Zeno of Citium, the Stoic. "God counseled Socrates to take the 'elenctic' station while giving advice [to others] (*sunebouleuen tèn elegtikên*), Diogenes the office of rebuking men in a kingly manner, and Zeno that of teaching men and laying down doctrines" (3.21.17–19). From the start, Epictetus signals that there is more than one way to fulfill the role of a philosopher, whether it be Socratic-style, Cynic-style, Stoic-style, or some combination thereof.² In this way, Epictetus recognizes that Socrates, together with Zeno, acted as doctors tending to sick souls (3.23.30–2); but, Epictetus also makes room for Socrates' claim that he was not a teacher (3.5.14–17 and 3.23.22). While Epictetus regards teaching as a legitimate activity for a philosopher, he accepts that Socrates denied being a teacher.

For the sections 2.1–3, I aim to elucidate Epictetus' understanding of the components of Socrates' role as a philosopher—the elenctic station, doctor, advisor, teacher. Section 2.1 concerns the *elenchus* along with other verbal techniques and the analogy of medicine. Section 2.2 discusses how Socrates offered advice without being a teacher. Section 2.3 briefly discusses where Epictetus himself deploys the *elenchus* and speculates on the reasons that Epictetus does not discuss the aporetic dialogues.

2.1 Cross-Examine and Apply Tonics without Embroidery

As the 3.21.17–19 ("God counseled ...") passage makes clear, the *elenchus* is central to Epictetus' understanding of Socrates. Epictetus' notion of the *elenchus* does not appear to be as fine-grained as Plato's notion, but it does

² On Diogenes' role, see Billerbeck 1978. On Zeno's role, see Schofield 2007.

have substance. For Epictetus, the *elenchus* is explicitly identified as one of three legitimate methods of philosophic discourse (*elenktikos*, *protreptikos*, *didaskalikos*). These three methods stand in contrast to a fourth, illegitimate class used by Sophists and philosopher wannabes—embroidered display (*epideiktikos*) (3.23.33–4). Throughout Epictetus’ references to these methods, Socrates regularly appears as a model for the three legitimate methods and a contrast for the fourth illegitimate method.

It is perhaps easiest to begin with the method inappropriate for philosophy because Epictetus dispenses with it quickly and it also serves as a foil for the proper classes. In his attack on *epideixis*, Epictetus plays a role similar to Socrates in the *Protagoras* who wishes to disabuse the excited Hippocrates of his fantasies about sophistry (*Prt.* 309a–314c). To unmask *epideixis*, Epictetus mocks the naked vanity of those who deploy it; they “gape for praise,” “count the numbers of the audience,” and pride themselves about listeners who are “clever at catching the points” (3.23.19). But, the ignorance of these vain men is easily exposed. When *epideixis* declares some venerated man or other to be faithful, we can ask the speaker, “What is a faithful man?” but we would find that he could not answer.³ Epictetus tells the practitioner of *epideixis*, “First learn what you are talking about and then do the talking” (3.23.18).

Even worse, if one approaches Socrates looking for rhetorical flourishes or clever sayings to be woven into an *epideixis*, one will entirely miss out on Socrates’ mission. First, practitioners of *epideixis* become mired in fruitless quibbling about the rhetoric of philosophic statements. Epictetus cites the opening line of Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*: “I have often wondered what arguments (*logois*) Socrates’ accusers can possibly have used” (1.1.1)⁴ and he imagines self-important rhetoricians declaring that the opening would be smoother if the word *logoi* was in the singular. The sarcasm continues when the student of *epideixis* is told, “You have been reading [this book] just as you would a little song ...” (*Disc.* 3.23.21). Had this young man read about Socrates in the right way, he would have attended to the important claims of Socrates such as the fact that his judges cannot hurt him (*Ap.* 30c) and that he aims to follow the best argument (*Crito* 46b–c). “But no, *your* idea of him, no doubt, is that, as he was taking them along, he used to say, ‘Come around today and hear me deliver a discourse in the house of Quadratus!’” (3.23.23). After still

3 One thinks of the *Phaedrus* here concerning the fact that writing is silent and cannot answer questions (275c–e), although Epictetus does not make that connection.

4 In his footnotes, Oldfather 1925 and 1928 rather exhaustively cites the original passages quoted or paraphrased by Epictetus. In researching this chapter, I benefitted greatly from his cross-references.

more biting remarks from Epictetus, this enthusiast for *epideixis* is presented with Socrates' opening remarks in the *Apology* in which he says, "Nor would it be seemly for me, O men of Athens, at my time of life to appear before you like some lad, and weave a cunning discourse" (3.23.25, *Ap.* 17c). Elsewhere, Epictetus emphasizes that "Socrates completely eliminated the thought of making a display (*epideiktikon*)" (*Ench.* 46.1).

As opposed to embroidered speech, the appropriate classes for philosophy are *elenktikos*, *protreptikos*, and *didaskalikos*. The instructive (*didaskalikos*) method will be discussed in the next section. Here I shall examine both the elenctic and protreptic classes since they are closely allied; both modes of discourse tackle contradictions (*machai*). "Every error involves a contradiction (*machên*). For since he who is in error does not wish to err, but to be right, it is clear that he is not doing what he wishes ... He is formidable in speech who, using protreptic and elenctic [methods], is able to show to each man the contradiction which causes him to err, and can clearly bring home to him how he is not doing what he wishes, and is doing what he does not wish. For as soon as any man is shown this, he will of his own accord abandon what he is doing" (2.26.1 and 4–5; cf. 7 and 3.9.13–14). Humans are inspired to change course when they are shown "the inconsistency (*tên machên*) in which they are floundering about and how they are paying attention to anything rather than what they truly want" because "they want the things that conduce to happiness, but they are looking for them in the wrong place" (3.23.34).

As we would expect, Epictetus exemplifies such formidable ability with the case of Socrates. He paraphrases Socrates' declaration that his arguments need only his fellow interlocutors (*prosdialegomenoi*) as witnesses (2.12.5; see *Grg.* 474a). These two forms of legitimate philosophic speech, *elenchus* and *protreptikê*, use an interchange between two (or more) parties. That is, they appear to be dialectical in the sense that they must work with agreed upon premises, as for example, found in the sample protreptic argument offered in *Euthydemus* 282a–d, "Since we all wish to be happy ..."5 Neither embroidered speech nor a large crowd are needed for these interchanges.

Although Epictetus identifies the *elenchus* and *protreptikê* as distinct classes of philosophic exchange (3.23.33–4), he defines neither term. Based on his deployment of these terms, I suggest that the difference between these methods is a matter of emphasis. For Epictetus, *elenchus* is a way of changing judgments or beliefs (held by the *hêgemonikon*—reason or the governing principle)

5 Epictetus does not employ the term *dialektikos*, so we may set aside difficulties about whether that term is co-extensive with Socratic *elenchus* as well as puzzles about the meaning of Platonic dialectic.

whereas *protreptikê* is a way of changing behavior.⁶ But, since judgment and belief govern behavior (see below), the two are interwoven although the *elenchus* is the dominant skill. So, for example, Epictetus castigates yet another pseudo-philosopher who delivers exhortations (*protreptikoi*) to virtue when he lacks the requisite intellectual expertise to back up his speech (3.16.7; note the implied contrast with Socrates who appears in the previous sentence, 3.16.5–6). And yet, if we see people who mistakenly claim that they are free even though they cower in terror before the Emperor, we will need to use the *elenchus* to show them their slavery (4.1.144–7).

Because of its power to change belief, the *elenchus* is appropriately cited by Epictetus as a tool for answering the Socratic summons to live the examined life. “This, then, is the starting point in philosophy—a perception of the state of one’s own governing principle (*hêgemonikon*); for when once a man realizes that it is weak, he will no longer wish to employ it upon great matters.... However, in a matter of theory it is easy enough to confute (*elegxai*) the man who does not know, but in the affairs of life a man does not submit himself to *elenchus*, and we hate the person who has confuted us (*ton elegxanta*). But Socrates used to tell us not to live an unexamined life (*anexetaston*)” (1.26.15–18; see *Ap.* 38a). Indeed, many people cannot bear to be told that they do not understand themselves and so they cannot endure Epictetus’ use of *elenchus* (2.14.19–21). Presumably, the Socratic *elenchus* aids his interlocutors in examining themselves because it clears away contradictions (2.26.1–7 cited above) and false opinion (*oiêsis*, 3.14.9);⁷ moreover, “Every error involves a contradiction (*machên*)” (2.26.1).

This clearing away of contradictions and conceits plays a constructive role for Epictetus’ Socrates because it prepares us to acquire knowledge of good and evil; such knowledge is important to both Socrates and Epictetus because they are intellectualists about virtue.⁸ “For if it is true that ‘all men err involuntarily’

6 Epictetus elsewhere says that protreptic speech is effective speech (3.23.36–8). For further discussion of the close relationship between elenctic and protreptic discourse, see Long 2002, 54–7.

7 It is possible that self-examination also happens by comparing oneself to others (*Disc.* 4.4.7), but Epictetus does not explicitly connect that activity to *elenchus*. Oldfather 1928, 314, suggests that Epictetus is thinking of Plutarch’s report about the daily habit of Plato in *De capiendis ex inimicis utilitate* 5.

8 While Epictetus accepts Socratic intellectualism and cites from the *Protagoras* in support of it, he uncouples it from hedonism (an idea taken up by Socrates in the *Protagoras* as part of Socrates’ defense of intellectualism). Epictetus rejects hedonism as a lewd philosophy and insists that it is incompatible with the character of Socrates; see 3.24.38–41. Cf. 11.19–22. It is a pity, however, that we have no evidence in Epictetus about his interpretive strategy for the *Protagoras*.

[*Prt.* 345d],” Epictetus says, “and you have learned the truth, it must needs be that you are doing right already” (1.17.14).⁹ “Therefore, there is no bad man who lives as he wants (*bouletai*), and accordingly no bad man is free” (4.1.3).¹⁰ To exhort humans to virtue, then, Socrates assisted his listeners by appealing to their rational understanding. “Govern us as rational beings by pointing out to us what is profitable, and we will follow you; point out what is unprofitable, and we will turn away from it. Bring us to admire and emulate you, as Socrates brought men to admire and emulate him. He was the one person who governed people as human beings, in that he brought them to subject to him their desire, their aversion, their choice, their refusal” (3.7.34). Thus, Socrates was rigorous about his own reason and paid attention “to nothing but his reason in everything he encountered” (*Ench.* 51).

The dual task of eliminating error and indicating profitability is accomplished by the logical scrutiny of terms. For “it is enough to say in defense of logic that it has the power to discriminate and examine everything else, and as one might say, to measure and weigh them. Who says this? Only Chrysippus and Zeno and Cleanthes? ... Does not Socrates, too, say the same thing? And of whom does Xenophon write, that he began with the examination of terms, asking about each, ‘What does it mean?’” (1.17.10–12; cf. *Mem.* 4.6.1). Such an examination should drive us back to our (innate) preconceptions,¹¹ recognizing how we have muddled them with false opinion (*oiêsis*) and mis-applied them (2.11.6–7; cf. 13–14). So, Epictetus says elsewhere, “Come, let him not be a fool, let him learn, as Socrates used to say, ‘What each several thing means’ [*Mem.* 4.6.1], and not apply his preconceptions at random to the particular cases. For this is the cause to men of all their evils, namely, their inability to apply their general preconceptions to the particular instances” (4.1.41–2). As Epictetus sees it, preconceptions are terms (such as “brave” or “pious”) so the study of what each thing means is the study of preconceptions. Epictetus here capitalizes on the Socratic search for definitions and its power to reveal our fundamental commitments and test ourselves.¹²

9 Cf. 1.28.1–7 and 2.22.36 where Epictetus explicitly summons Plato to his aid, citing from *Soph.* 228c to the effect that “every soul is unwillingly deprived of the truth”.

10 I hear an echo of Socrates’ line in *Grg.* 466d–e that orators do “whatever seems good (*dokei*) to them” and “not whatever they want (*boulôntai*) to do.”

11 I agree with Brennan 2006, 286–7, that Epictetus’ preconceptions play a similar role in his epistemology as does recollection in Plato’s epistemology; I note, however, that Epictetus does not explicitly draw that connection. See Long 2002, 81–4, for further discussion of Epictetus’ synthesis of preconceptions with the method of the *elenchus*.

12 For discussion, see Wolfsdorf 2003, 305–8; he points to *Prt.* 333c.

Since “all men err involuntarily” and the *elenchus* removes contradictions in our opinions and errors in the application of our (natural) preconceptions, Socrates’ elenctic mission situates him as a doctor of the *psuchê*, healing the sickness of vice (cf. *Grg.* 480a–b) with the tonic of philosophy. “The lecture-room of the philosopher is a hospital; you ought not to walk out of it in pleasure but in pain. For you are not well when you come ...” (3.23.30). The idea here seems to be that the beginning of treatment will initially be unpleasant, perhaps in the form of cautery, bloodletting, or gag-inducing medicines. The tonic of philosophy may also involve a strenuous regimen of purification. Here we must remember that the lines between ancient medicine and ancient religion were fluid; the mechanisms of purification (sacrificial foods and incantation) were interpreted using the same rubric of harmony-restoration. For Epictetus as for Socrates, philosophy is a medicine to be repeated daily just as one repeats a charm or incantation. “These are the lessons that philosophers ought to rehearse, these they ought to write down daily, in these they ought to exercise themselves” (1.1.25). Although Epictetus does not refer to the *Charmides* explicitly, this rehearsal calls to mind Socrates’ treatment of philosophy as a charm that assists the *psuchê* and thereby assists in producing bodily health (*Chrm.* 156d–157c; cf. *Phd.* 77e–78a).

Intriguingly, Epictetus also uses the analogy of hospital doctors in order to differentiate the proper methods of discourse for philosophy from *epideixis*. Medical doctors do not invite patients nor do they look for praise; instead, they make house calls only when summoned (3.23.27–9). Thus, we should not be *elenktikos* and ponderous with others merely because we find their behavior inappropriate (*Ench.* 38.8). And, Epictetus says, it would be ridiculous for a doctor to send away his patients with little mottoes. “Was this what Socrates used to do, or Zeno, or Cleanthes?” (3.23.32). From this angle, epideictic speech is quite useless (cf. *Grg.* 521a–522d where unphilosophic speech is compared to giving candy to those who are sick).

2.2 *Giving Advice without Teaching*

Once we are purged of faulty opinions, Socrates can advise us on virtuous living. As we saw at the outset, the oracle counseled Socrates to “take the ‘elenctic’ station while giving advice [to others]” (3.21.17–19). Offering advice is a part of a philosopher’s job¹³ and it is especially a part of the Xenophontic portrait of Socrates. “When [Socrates’] friends had difficulties, if they were due to ignorance, he tried to remedy them by giving advice (*gnômêi*), and if

13 See 3.16.9–11 for an example of philosophic advice about habituation.

to deficiency, by teaching them to help one another as much as they could" (*Mem.* 2.7.1).

It should perhaps come as no surprise that, once we tally up all of Epictetus' citations of Socratic advice and good counsel, the overwhelmingly dominant advice is to value only one's own volition (*prohairesis*) as opposed to valuing external goods. Although scholars rightly regard Epictetus as an innovator when he makes *prohairesis* and the proper use of impressions to be the essence of virtue,¹⁴ it is not unreasonable for him to see Socrates as a kindred spirit about volition. First, Epictetus connects the Delphic inscription, "Know yourself," with *prohairesis*. True harm is not of the body (for it is a mere indifferent and outside of our control, cf. 1.18.12 and 1.30.2–5) but of our volition (*prohairesis*, cf. 3.3.9–10). To know oneself is to know one's *prohairesis*.¹⁵ This is why the ancients gave us the injunction, "Know yourself" (1.18.18). Such knowledge is, I suggest, both universal (know that moral value is based solely on volition) and particular (know the tenor of one's own volition). In turn, Epictetus very nearly identifies Socrates' mission with self-knowledge. After an admiring treatment of the oracle of Apollo (3.1.16–18), Epictetus notes its famous invocation to self-knowledge (3.1.18) and then immediately segues to an account of Socrates' mission to prevail "upon all his visitors to keep watch over themselves" (3.18.19, cf. *Ap.* 28e).¹⁶ And, such self-knowledge is surely a corollary of the examined life or perhaps even the result of it.

Second, intellectualism about virtue dovetails quite naturally with a cognitive theory of the emotions; Epictetus appeals to that very theory in order to explain Socrates' serenity about death. "For example, death is nothing dreadful, or else Socrates too would have thought so, but the judgment that death is dreadful, this is the dreadful thing. When, therefore, we are hindered, or disturbed, or grieved, let us never blame anyone but ourselves, that is, our own judgments" (*Ench.* 5.1). Our judgments are up to us because they are up to our *prohairesis* (4.1.86–102), that is, up to our *hêgemonikon* (3.3.1).

On the basis of the foregoing description of *prohairesis*, a number of Epictetus' reports of Socrates fall into place. When Socrates tells Alcibiades to make his soul beautiful (*Alc.* 131d–132c), Epictetus interprets that advice to mean "Make beautiful your *prohairesis*, eradicate your worthless opinions" (3.1.42). When Socrates tells his listeners that mortals are wrongfully straining

14 Long 2002, 34, suggests that Epictetus "was probably original in specifying the ethical project as 'making correct use of mental impressions.'"

15 Such self-knowledge also includes knowledge of one's role (*Ench.* 17 and fr. 1). See below.

16 Epictetus surely took Socrates to be aware of the Delphic inscription's significance given the citation of the inscription by Socrates in works familiar to Epictetus; see *Alc.* 129a, *Chrm.* 165a, *Prt.* 343b, *Phdr.* 229e, *Phlb.* 48c, and *Mem.* 4.2.24.

after wealth rather than justice (*Clit.* 407a–b), Epictetus interprets that to mean “you are looking for serenity and happiness in the wrong place, where it does not exist, and you do not believe when another points them out to you. Why do you look for it outside? It does not reside in the body” (3.22.26). Moreover, because Socrates concerns himself only with his own *prohairesis*, he is not enslaved to external goods (2.2.8–19). He would not chain himself by chaining other humans (4.1.120, echoing *Soph.* 222b). Nor does Socrates need to pay court to a foreign king for the sake of money since money, like all external accoutrements, is unnecessary to his station (frag. 11).¹⁷

Given the power of Socrates’ mission for ethical reform and his willingness to advise his associates, we are left to explain how Epictetus understood Socrates’ declaration that he was not a teacher. The declaration is doubly puzzling given that Epictetus lists the “instructive (*didaskalikos*) method” as a legitimate philosophic mode of discourse (3.23.33–4) and Epictetus understands himself to be a teacher (cf. 1.5.1–2). In Plato’s *Apology*, Socrates puts pressure on the fact that he did not take fees (19d), but Epictetus’ portrait of Socrates appears more influenced by Xenophon’s explanation. “In eschewing fees, he considered that he was protecting his own independence; those who accepted a fee in return for their services he nicknamed ‘self-enslavers’” (*Mem.* 1.2.6). Moreover, “he never undertook to teach how this [i.e., being virtuous] could be done, but by obviously *being* such a person, he made those who spent their time with him hope that, if they followed his example, they would develop the same character” (*Mem.* 1.2.3).¹⁸

In order to *be* a good man, Socrates had to focus on his reason, his character, and his own improvement (cf. *Ench.* 51). He also needed self-knowledge about his own capacities.¹⁹ There is, of course, a potential puzzle here about how Socrates was able to become a good role model without, apparently, having his own role model. Epictetus appears to solve that puzzle by saying that Socrates had the benefit of the oracle (3.21.17–19) and that Zeus endowed Socrates

17 Although I have argued that Epictetus’ Socrates advises us primarily about *prohairesis*, Long 2002, 70–1, offers the fascinating suggestion that Epictetus also adopts the positive content of the *Gorgias* even when neither Socrates or *Gorgias* is cited. I see no reason to doubt Long’s sensitive detection of these parallels although I regard the *Apology* as the more important text for Epictetus. See §3.3 below.

18 Nevertheless, as Epictetus stresses, even with Socrates’ excellent model, it is still up to the *prohairesis* of each of his associates to approach Socrates’ advice in the right way because we only learn what we seek to learn (2.17.3–4, 2.21.15–22 and 3.9.8–11).

19 Cf. *Disc.* 3.24.20–37 with Xenophon’s *Mem.* 4.2.24–30. I further explore the relationship between Socrates, self-knowledge, one’s capacities, and one’s roles in Johnson 2014, 11–13 and 25–9.

with the necessary talents for becoming a moral paradigm (3.21.17–18).²⁰ Nevertheless, for those of us modeling our behavior on Socrates (without benefit of Zeus' gift to Socrates), the account of how Socrates cultivated his character remains instructive. Epictetus brings out Socrates' cultivation of his character in two condensed passages; they are worth quoting and unpacking since they elucidate how Socrates' station is an elenctic one but not a didactic one. The first passage takes aim at those who look for the wrong thing in Socrates:

But what does Socrates say? "As one man rejoices," remarks he, "in improving his own farm, and another his own horse, so I rejoice day by day in following the course of my own improvement."²¹ In what respect; in little phrases (*lexeidia*)?—Man, hold your tongue.—In little philosophic theories (*theôrêmatia*), then?—What are you doing?—Well, I don't see anything else that the philosophers spend their time on.—Is it nothing in your eyes never to bring accusation against anyone, be it God or man? Never to blame anyone? Always to wear the same expression on one's face, whether one is coming out or going in? These are the things which Socrates knew (*eidei*), and yet he never said that he either knew (*oiden*) or taught anything (*didaskei*). But if someone called for little phrases (*lexeidia*) or little philosophic theories (*theôrêmatia*), he used to take him over to Protagoras or Hippias. It was just as though someone had come to him for fresh vegetables, and he would have taken him over to the market gardener. Who, then, among you makes this purpose of Socrates the purpose of his own life?

Diss. 3.5.14–18

The second passage instructs a listener in how to model oneself on Socrates:

How long will you wait to think yourself worthy of the best things, and to transgress in no way against the distinctions set up by reason (*logos*)? You have received the philosophical principles (*theôrêmata*) which you ought to accept, and you have accepted them.... Make up your mind ... that the fitting thing for you to do is to live as a mature man who is making

20 Perhaps Epictetus is thinking of Socrates' statement at the end of the *Meno*, "virtue appears to be present in those of us who may possess it as a gift from the gods" (100b). Cf. Epictetus' "bull in the herd" analogy at *Disc.* 1.2.30–2, 3.22.6–7, and 3.22.99.

21 Oldfather 1928, 44, suggests that the idea here may come from Xen. *Mem.* 1.6.8 or Pl. *Prt.* 318a but he says that those passages "express the idea so differently that we have here probably (through Chrysippus) a fragment from one of the lost Socratic dialogues, of which there was a large body." Cf. Dobbin 2008, 267.

progress, and let everything which seems to you to be best be for you a law that must not be transgressed.... This is the way Socrates became what he was, by paying attention to nothing but his reason (*logos*) in everything that he encountered.

Ench. 51.1–3

In the first passage, those who sought “little philosophic theories” (*theôrêmatia*; note the diminutive)²² from Socrates are taken over to the Sophists.²³ Elsewhere, Epictetus suggests that these “little principles supply you [i.e., a fake philosopher] with material for making epideictic speeches” (2.21.17; see above on *epideixis*). In the second passage, Epictetus tells a listener that he (the listener) already has the (legitimate) philosophic principles (*theôrêmata*)²⁴ so he ought to start making progress by emulating Socrates’ improvement of his own reason. As Epictetus says elsewhere, ethical improvement focuses on perfecting our volition (*prohairesis*) and its use of external impressions. Owing to Epictetan and Socratic intellectualism (1.17.14 and 4.1.3; see above), ethical cultivation necessarily entails *theôrêmata* (2.23.40).

Although Socrates is not a teacher of *theôrêmata*, Epictetus points to him as a corrective and a model for the way students should digest them. Socrates “was satisfied with one thing, that is, *being* a philosopher, and ... he was not annoyed at not being taken for one” (4.8.23). Like Socrates, one must be unassuming about studying *theôrêmata*. Do not be ostentatious, lecture others, or be offended if others believe you are not a philosopher. Socrates did not mind when

people came to him wanting to be introduced to philosophers, and he used to bring them along. So well did he submit to being overlooked. And if talk about some *theôrêma* arises among laymen, keep quiet for the most part, for there is great danger that you will spew up immediately what you have not digested.²⁵ So when a man tells you that you know nothing, and you, like Socrates, are not hurt, then rest assured that you are making a beginning with the business you have undertaken.

Ench. 41

22 We might translate *theôrêmatia* as “clichés.”

23 Cf. *Tht.* 151b, where Socrates says that such people “do not seem to me somehow to be pregnant,” leading him to send them to Prodicus or other such men.

24 Philosophy has its own *theôrêmata*, its subject is *logos*, and it aims at right reason (*orthos logos*) (4.8.10–12).

25 *Theôrêmata* are “digested” by habituation (3.21.1–2) and practice (4.6.15–17). They must be treated like medicine and utilized in the right way (2.21.15–22).

After Epictetus tells us that Socrates focused on “*being* a philosopher” (4.8.23), he implicitly takes up Socrates’ disavowal of being a teacher. He implies that Socrates can be a fine and good man without being a teacher. “What is the function of a fine and good man? To have many pupils? Not at all.... Well, is it to set forth difficult *theôrêmata* with precision? Other men shall see to these things also” (4.8.24). We have good grounds to infer that Plato (as a distinct personality from Socrates) was such a man for Epictetus. Epictetus defends Plato against someone who “censures Plato for wishing to define every term” (2.17.5). Epictetus replies that, while we do have (innate) preconceptions such as “good,” we need assistance in learning what falls under that concept and how to apply it to particular circumstances. Definitions assist us in that process (2.17.6–13). Accordingly, the “first and most necessary division in philosophy is that which has to do with the application of *theôrêmata*, as, for example, Do not lie” (*Ench.* 52.1). And, “we need education (*paideias*) most of all so that we learn to adapt ... our preconception of what is reasonable ... to the particular instances” (1.2.6; cf. 1.11.12–15, 1.22.1–9, 2.11.18). Learning to apply our preconceptions, as we saw, is important because therein contradictions can arise (1.22.1–3) and “the cause to men of all their evils [is] their inability to apply their general preconceptions to the particular instances” (4.1.42).²⁶

Even though Socrates’ role was elenctic rather than didactic, Epictetus clearly did not believe Socrates could or should be aligned with Academic skepticism (as later members of the Academy wished to do). Epictetus detested Academic skeptics and he excoriates them in several discourses (1.5, 1.27, 2.18); he hurled insults at them, for example, calling a skeptic who doubts being awake “worse than a corpse” (1.5.8). Epictetus thereby decouples the *elenchus* from skepticism. Not only do legitimate philosophers know (*eidenai*) and teach (*didaskein*) us our obligations (1.25.5–7), Epictetus’ praise of Socrates as a model suggests that Socrates has knowledge (“these are the things which Socrates knew (*êidei*),” 3.5.17). Since virtue is a form of knowledge and Socrates was an exemplar of virtue, Socrates of necessity must have known the *theôrêmata* of virtue; indeed, it is impossible to have virtue on the basis of ignorance (see 2.24.19). As Epictetus therefore sees it, teachers of philosophy not only know philosophic *theôrêmata* and teach them to others, they also work to define such principles, to help students apply them, and to habituate themselves to such principles. While Epictetus thus implies that Socrates has knowledge of philosophic principles (*theôrêmata*) and holds him up as a model for living by them, he accepts that formal teaching of them was not a part of Socrates’

26 Such teaching would, it seems, have to be rather systematic. See 2.14 as well as Epictetus’ own theory of education, the so-called *topoi* in 1.7 and 2.17.

mission.²⁷ Instead, he will associate such instruction with Plato, with Zeno of Citium, and with his own teaching.

What, then, of Socrates' famous disavowal in the *Apology* that he is wise because he knows that he knows nothing (*Ap.* 21b–d)? Unfortunately, Epictetus does not cite that precise passage so we do not have direct evidence about his understanding of it. Epictetus could say that Socrates was being ironic, but Epictetus nowhere appeals to irony in order to explain Socrates; indeed, the words *eirôn*, *eirôneia*, *eirôneuomai*, and *eirônikos* do not appear in the surviving corpus from Epictetus.²⁸ Assuming that Epictetus did not have a tin ear for irony, I suggest that he ignored Socratic irony because he was ever on the hunt for the genuine lessons that could be extracted from the life and words of Socrates. Thus, I suspect that Epictetus took seriously Socrates' admission that he has a kind of "human wisdom" (*Ap.* 20d) and perhaps that includes some sort of ethical knowledge; Socrates does declare: "I do know, however, that it is wicked and shameful to do wrong, to disobey one's superior, be he god or man" (*Ap.* 29b). Moreover, Epictetus appears to understand the disavowal as a couplet with his disavowal of teaching: "he never said that he knew (*oiden*) something or taught it" (3.5.17) and "who ever heard Socrates saying 'I know (*oida*) something and teach it'?" (3.23.22). The disavowal, it seems, applies to the whole phrase—knowing *and* teaching combined.²⁹

2.3 *Socrates' Method in Action: Whither Aporia?*

Epictetus frequently puts the Socratic *elenchus* to use in the *Discourses*. His best discussion resides in 2.12 in which he explicitly discusses the argumentative skills of Socrates while engaging his Roman audience in a kind of *elenchus* about Socrates. Other explicit examples include 2.17 (esp. 2.17.35), 3.1 (esp.

27 Epictetus could have followed Xenophon on this point: "Socrates used to reveal his opinions (*gnômên*) candidly to his companions" but "he also tried to ensure that they should be self-sufficient (*autarkeis*)" (*Mem.* 4.7.1) by being informed for themselves on certain topics (4.7.2).

28 Epictetus himself rarely employs irony when mere sarcasm or bluntness will do the job. Brennan 2006, 291–5, points to 1.8.14, 1.16.20, and 3.7.1 as examples of irony but I find only the last instance a plausible example of irony in Epictetus. Long 2002, 73, convincingly cites 3.20.19 as an instance of Epictetus' use of irony.

29 Long 2002, 93–4, also defends Epictetus' handling of Socrates' profession of ignorance but uses a different strategy: "Epictetus is consistently reticent and self-deprecating about his own competence and identity as a philosopher ... Like Plato's Socrates, he professes no interest in speculation about the exact details of the physical world ... Plato's Socrates, even in the so-called Socratic dialogues, strenuously argues for such doctrines as those I listed when outlining the *Gorgias*."

19–21 and 42), and Fragment 28a. The *elenchus* is also implicitly but forcefully deployed in 2.14.14–22.³⁰

In all of these examples, Epictetus utilizes the *elenchus* for constructive ends. His interlocutors do not leave in a frustrated state of *aporia*. Thus, Epictetus does not seem to engage the aporetic dialogues (such as the *Euthyphro* or the *Lysis*). I suspect that Epictetus regarded those dialogues merely as instances in which a hubristic individual is shown that he has false opinions. Euthyphro, for example, professes to be an expert on religious matters (*Euthyphr.* 4b and 6b) but he needs to be disabused of such conceit (cf. *Disc.* 3.14.9). Had Euthyphro sincerely gone to Socrates looking for insight about piety, however, they could have had a constructive conversation about the universal human preconception concerning what is holy (cf. *Disc.* 1.22). Accordingly, I suggest, the aporetic dialogues are merely refutative of an individual and are not indicative of any ignorance on the part of Epictetus' Socrates.

3 Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and Plato's *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*

Four Socratic works deserve special mention because of the place they hold in Epictetus' reception of Socrates. Xenophon's *Memorabilia* is a source for some of Epictetus' theology as well as details about Socrates' family. Regarding Plato, Epictetus makes numerous references to the dialogues dramatically linked to the trial of Socrates (*Euthyphro* excepted) and he has a particularly distinctive reading of the *Apology*. While Epictetus was not trying to summarize the *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo* and we should not put too much pressure on what he omits to reference in them, we do have enough to see that Epictetus used these dialogues for their ethical content.³¹

3.1 Socrates' Theology: *Memorabilia*

Although the Stoics drew inspiration from Plato's *Timaeus* for some of their arguments from divine design,³² Epictetus appears to have drawn his own inspiration from Xenophon's many Socratic design arguments. In fragment

30 Long 2002, 74–89, illuminatingly discusses how Epictetus utilizes the *elenchus* in 1.11, 1.28.6–8, 2.12, and 2.26.

31 I note that Epictetus would likely have boxed our ears for giving the *Discourses of Arrian* this much attention. See, for example, how he treats the student who wants to engage in a close study of Chrysippus' work on a logical puzzle, *The Liar*; the student is told to hang himself (2.17.34). He would surely tell us to spend our time cultivating our characters rather than spending so much time with Arrian's books.

32 Sedley 2007, 225–30.

23, Epictetus explicitly cites from Xenophon’s Socrates about how the divine craftsman (Nature, in Stoic parlance) is “fond of living creatures (*philozôios*)” (*Mem.* 1.4.7). The phrase is extracted from a chapter in which Socrates offers a divine design argument, one that provides a model for Epictetus’ own reflections upon piety and providential design (see especially *Disc.* 1.6, 2.8.21–23, and *Ench.* 31). I here align the argument of *Memorabilia* 1.4 with the concomitant echoes in Epictetus.

TABLE 9.1 Epictetus’ Xenophontic theology

Xenophon’s Socrates	Epictetus’ deployment of the same themes
<i>Memorabilia</i> 1.4.4–8; cf. 4.3.3–10	<i>Discourses</i> 1.6.18–31, 2.8.7–8, 2.16.12–17, 3.26.27–39, and 4.11.9–18. Fragment 23 quotes from <i>Memorabilia</i> 1.4.7
<i>Memorabilia</i> 1.4.9	<i>Discourses</i> 2.14.25–9
<i>Memorabilia</i> 1.4.11–14; cf. 4.3.11	<i>Discourses</i> 2.23.5–15
<i>Memorabilia</i> 1.4.15–19; cf. 1.1.19 and 4.3.11–14	<i>Discourses</i> 1.12.3

3.2 Socrates’ Family: *Memorabilia*

Aside from situating us within a providential cosmos, Epictetus looks to Xenophon’s Socrates for insight about Socrates’ family. While Plato is aware of Socrates’ family (*Ap.* 34d), they appear in the *Phaedo* only to be sent away (60a and 116b). By contrast, Xenophon takes us inside of Socrates’ home and shows us how his mission played out in private life. At issue is Socrates’ merger of his elenctic mission with his family life when similarly demanding roles, such as that of a Cynic, seem to preclude having a family. According to Epictetus, the role of a Cynic (“the office of rebuking men in a kingly manner,” 3.21.19) demands so much that it is nigh impossible to be an adequate parent.³³ Socrates’ parental role would be difficult enough if his family had been pliant, but “Socrates lived ... with a wife [Xanthippe] and children” (3.26.23, drawing on Xen. *Mem.* 2.2.5–7 and *Symp.* 2.10), “putting up with a harsh wife and inconsiderate son [Lamprocles]” (4.5.33).³⁴ Regarding his (eldest) son, Lamprocles, Epictetus appears to be thinking of the exchange offered in *Memorabilia* 2.2 in which

33 Crates the Cynic excepted (3.22.72–6). Cf. 3.24.36 where family life is challenging for a Senator to maintain.

34 Epictetus also relates at 4.5.33 that Xanthippe poured (dirty) water over Socrates’ head (see Sen. *Constant.* 18.5 and DL 2.36) and smashed some little cakes given to Socrates (cf. Ath. 14.51 and Ael. *VH* 11.12). I owe these references to Oldfather 1928, 344.

Socrates cross-examines Lamprocles and persuades him to be considerate to his mother.

Epictetus interprets that domestic picture in a characteristically Stoic fashion. “Did Socrates not treat affectionately (*ephilen*) his own children? But as a free man, as one who remembers that he was first obliged to be a friend (*philon*) to the gods. That is why he succeeded in everything that becomes a good man, both in making his defense, and in assessing his own penalty, and before that the time in his services as council member or soldier” (3.24.60–1). That is, Socrates’ first relationship was with the cosmos.³⁵ Furthermore, Epictetus has supplied us (and his version of Socrates) with the philosophical resources to explain Socrates’ calm before Xanthippe and Lamprocles. As we saw, Epictetus’ Socrates advises us to beautify our *prohairesis* (3.1.42) rather than “looking for serenity ... in the body” (3.22.26). From this Stoic perspective, we can see that externals, including kinships, are neither good nor evil but indifferent (3.3.5–10). This indifference, Epictetus stresses, does not require us to be “unfeeling like a statue” but rather it requires that we should preserve our “natural and acquired relations as a man who honors the gods, as a son, as a brother, as a father, as a citizen” (3.2.4). As Long puts it, “The relevant relationship is entirely one-sided: us in relation to them, not them in relation to us” (2002, 237). In sum, Socrates could play his role as father because he prioritized his cosmic obligations first and because he confined himself to what was solely under his command—his *prohairesis*.³⁶

3.3 *Plato’s Apology*

Going by citations alone, Plato’s *Apology* was preeminent in Epictetus’ mind. And yet, Xenophon’s *Apology* seems to be lurking in the background of Epictetus’ interpretation of Plato. Epictetus refers explicitly to Socrates’ lack of preparation for his trial and paraphrases the explanation found in Xenophon. “Do I not seem to you to have spent my whole life in preparing to defend myself? ... All my life I have been guiltless of wrong-doing; and that I consider the finest preparation for a defense” (Xen. *Ap.* 3). Epictetus connects that avoidance of wrong-doing with *prohairesis*, with what is up to us: “I have maintained,’ says [Socrates], ‘that which is under my control.’—‘How then?’—‘I have never done anything that was wrong either in my private or in my public life’” (2.2.8–10). Curiously, while Epictetus believed in divination (and he even cites Socrates as evidence about how to use it appropriately [*Ench.* 32]), he makes no mention of the role played by Socrates’ divine sign, whether to

35 On Socrates’ cosmopolitanism, see 1.9.1–2, discussed in connection to the *Crito* below.

36 For further discussion, see Johnson 2014, 16–21, 29–33, and 65–6.

prevent his preparations (Xen. *Ap.* 4) or tacitly to approve Socrates' entry into court (Pl. *Ap.* 40a–b).

Nevertheless, Epictetus appears to accept Xenophon's interpretation that Socrates' courtroom speech guaranteed his conviction (Xen. *Ap.* 1 and 32). However, Epictetus implicitly rejects the motive assigned by Xenophon, one of despair (Xen. *Ap.* 1). As Epictetus sees it, Socrates could have won his trial (2.2.15–18) but it was the “right time ... for Socrates deliberately to provoke [his] judges” (2.2.18). Socrates did so because God had sounded the recall (a Stoic metaphor for suicide): “for He [God] has need of such a universe, and of such men who go to and fro upon the earth. But if He gives a signal to retreat, as He did to Socrates, I must obey Him who gives the signal, as I would a general” (1.29.29; cf. 2.5.25–9, 3.24.99, and 3.26.28). While suicide can be impious when it runs contrary to God's wishes (cf. *Phd.* 61c–62c), it is not impious when sanctioned by the gods (*Disc.* 4.10.25–30). Socrates was summoned to suicide because it was useful to the cosmos; “if we were useful to men by living, should we not have done much more good to men by dying when we ought, and as we ought? And now that Socrates is dead the memory of him is no less useful to men, nay, is perhaps even more useful, than what he did or said while he still lived” (4.1.168–9).

With Epictetus' interpretive strategy in hand, let us turn to Plato's *Apology* as reported by Epictetus. I will first line up the passages from the *Apology* with the citations to it from the *Discourses* and the *Encheiridion*. I will then comment on Epictetus' creative use of the *Apology* to synthesize Socrates' mission with Epictetus' role ethics.

TABLE 9.2 Plato's *Apology* in Epictetus

Plato's <i>Apology</i>	Epictetus' citations
<i>Apology</i> 17a	<i>Discourses</i> 3.23.25–6
<i>Apology</i> 19b–c	<i>Discourses</i> 4.11.20–1; cf. 4.11.19
<i>Apology</i> 19c–20c	<i>Discourses</i> 3.5.17, 3.23.22, and 4.8.22–4
<i>Apology</i> 20d–21a, 28e–29d, and 30a	<i>Discourses</i> 3.21.19; 1.9.22 and repeated at 3.24.99; cf. 1.9.16 and 3.24.31
<i>Apology</i> 27a–28a	<i>Discourses</i> 2.5.18–21; cf. 4.1.159
<i>Apology</i> 30c–d	<i>Discourses</i> 1.29.16–17, 3.23.20–3, and <i>Encheiridion</i> 53

<i>Apology</i> 32b–c; <i>Memorabilia</i> 1.1.18	<i>Discourses</i> 4.1.160–4 and 4.7.29; cf. 2.13.24 and 4.7.29–31
<i>Apology</i> 35e	<i>Discourses</i> 3.18.4
<i>Apology</i> 37e–38a	<i>Discourses</i> 3.1.20–3
<i>Apology</i> 38a	<i>Discourses</i> 1.26.18 and 3.12.15
<i>Apology</i> 39c: “vengeance will come upon you immediately after my death”; Xenophon’s <i>Apology</i> 29–31 adds the specific prophesy that Anytus becomes a degenerate.	<i>Discourses</i> 4.1.123: “You [i.e., Epictetus] imply, then, that Socrates did not fare badly?—He did not [says Epictetus]; it was his judges and accusers who fared badly.”
<i>Apology</i> 41d	<i>Discourses</i> 3.26.28

Of all his references to the *Apology*, it is Socrates’ divinely given “station and post (*chôran kai taxin*)” (3.24.99) that takes center stage for Epictetus’ own ethics. As we explored above, Epictetus links the examined life with the *elenchus* and with self-knowledge. But, on the basis of the *Apology*, Epictetus understands Socrates’ station and post to be a role (*prosôpon*),³⁷ so he understands the summons to self-knowledge as the summons to know one’s own role. “If someone ordered a singer in a chorus to ‘know himself,’ would he not attend to the order by paying attention both to his fellow chorus members and to harmonizing with them?—Yes—And so for a sailor? or a soldier?” (fr. 1). Roles include any number of stations, from carpenter to cithara-player (3.23.3–5), from citizen to fellow-traveler (2.14.8). Like Socrates’ own station, every role is assigned by God. “Remember that you are an actor in a drama, which is as the playwright wishes ... For this is what is yours: to finely play the role that is given; but to select [that role] itself is another’s [i.e., the divine playwright]” (*Ench.* 17).³⁸

The central importance of the *Apology* for Epictetus’ interpretation of Socrates’ mission is usefully brought out by way of contrast. In the *Alcibiades*, Socrates advises Alcibiades to know himself (129a) and, as Julia Annas argues, “self-knowledge is knowledge of oneself in relation to others” (Annas 1985, 122). This self-knowledge, she says, concerns “what F.H. Bradley called ‘my station and its duties’” (121). This connection between self-knowledge and roles

37 While *prosôpon* is Epictetus’ preferred term, he readily uses a variety of synonyms: *chôra*, *taxis*, *stasis*, *schesis*, and even *hupothesis*. See Johnson 2014, 14.

38 I argue at length for this claim in Johnson 2014, 11–41.

in the *Alcibiades* is certainly Epictetan, but Epictetus' concept of a role is not Bradleyan. Bradley argues that the self is entirely a social creation and so "my station and its duties" is similarly a social product. For Epictetus, the entire community of roles is designed by God (3.22.3–8 and *Ench.* 17). While we must, of course, act with reference to the whole (2.10.3–4), the bedrock of our roles is our own divinely apportioned natures and capacities (1.2.30–1, 3.22.5–7, and *Ench.* 24.4). The *Apology*, through its tale of the oracle, indicates that Socrates was assigned his role by God; in addition, Socrates was given the necessary and special equipment to fulfill his challenging role (3.21.17–20; cf. 1.6.30–7). Hence, Socrates rightfully declares that he is hard to replace (*Ap.* 31a). Socrates' station is constructed, not by society, but by Nature.

3.4 *Plato's Crito*

The *Crito* presents itself as Socrates' argument against escaping prison, but its arguments are in the service of a broader thesis about the priority of *logos* (46b–c, 48e–49a, and 54d–e) and it is this larger thesis that captures Epictetus' attention. Epictetus' Socrates explains, "I have always been the kind of man to pay attention to none of my own affairs, but only to the *logos* which strikes me as best upon reflection" (3.23.20, cf. *Crito* 46b–c). Regarding this *logos*, it is likely that Epictetus is bringing his own Stoic metaphysics to the table; for Epictetus, the priority of *logos* entails following not only the best argument but also the supreme logician—cosmic *logos* or Nature—of which we are a part (cf. *Disc.* 2.10.3–4 and 4.1.99–112). At the same time, Epictetus brings his belief that virtuous action is none other than *prohairesis* making the proper use of impressions by following *logos*, so we must preserve our *prohairesis* rather than external goods. It is from this perspective that we can see the pattern behind Epictetus' scattered citations from the *Crito*.

Above all, Epictetus admired Socrates' reaction to learning that his execution was imminent, namely: "If it pleases the gods, so be it" (*Crito* 43d). Epictetus four times quotes a variation of that line (1.29.17, 3.22.95, 4.4.21, and *Ench.* 53), a sentiment he identifies with the line from Cleanthes' "Hymn to Zeus," "Lead me on, O Zeus, and Destiny" (3.22.95, cf. *Ench.* 53). Because of this pious disposition, Socrates has tranquility about his death and does not bemoan his fate (1.29.17); he also has the courage to speak freely to all (3.22.95). Elsewhere, Epictetus says that to bemoan the loss of some preferred indifferent is to act like a stranger in the universe (3.24.21). But, when we play our part by aligning our *prohairesis* with the will of Zeus (i.e., Nature), we are *willingly* playing our part (cf. 1.6.32–6, 2.6.9–10 and cf. 2.10.5–6). We are, in the Stoic sense, free (3.24.61). Thus, Epictetus is able to make the counter-intuitive claim that "Socrates was not in prison, for he was there willingly" (1.12.24).

Socrates also follows divine will by placing sole value in virtuous living rather than living at all costs (since being alive is a mere preferred indifferent). Thus, Epictetus approvingly paraphrases Socrates' statement that "the most important thing is not life, but the good life" (*Crito* 48b; see *Disc.* 1.4.31). Epictetus also accepts Socrates' argument that we must never return wrong for wrong (*Crito* 48b–50a), explaining that "injustice in itself is a great injury to the unjust man" (*Disc.* 4.5.10). This latter claim serves as an important corrective to Xenophon's Socrates who accepts the customary Greek ideal of helping one's friends while harming one's enemies (cf. Epictetus fr. 5).³⁹

Thus, when Crito bids Socrates to consider escape for the sake of his children (*Crito* 45d), Socrates is not persuaded; "he regards what is fitting, and as for other considerations, he does not so much as look at or consider them. For he did not care, he says, to save his paltry body (*sômaton*), but only that which is increased and preserved by right conduct, and is diminished and destroyed by evil conduct [i.e., *prohairesis*]" (4.1.163; cf. 3.1.60–1).⁴⁰ Similarly, when Socrates engages in an imagined debate with the laws, he envisions being invited to escape to Thessaly while his children will be cared for by friends back in Athens (*Crito* 54a). Epictetus' Socrates gives the same response to that invitation, namely, "If I had gone to Thessaly, you would have looked after them; but when I have gone down to the house of Hades, will there be no one to look after them?" (4.1.166). In Epictetus' hands, Socrates' confidence about the fate of his children exhibits his trust in providence.

What of the dialogue with Athenian law in which Socrates argues he must not flee his sentence (50a–53b)? I suggest that Epictetus can accept the argument so long as we take it to be consistent with cosmopolitanism; we must understand it as part of our cosmic place to stand by our local post and to honor just agreements we made there (compare the obligations of a foot relative to the body, 2.10.3–4 and 2.5.24–6). In other words, our local agreements have force only because they fit with cosmic orders. The cosmopolitan feature is important because Epictetus locates cosmopolitanism in Socrates. "If what is said by the philosophers regarding the kinship of God and men be true, what other course remains for men but that which Socrates took when asked to what country he belonged, never to say 'I am an Athenian,' or 'I am a Corinthian,' but 'I am a citizen of the universe?' For why do you say that you are an Athenian, instead of mentioning merely that corner into which your paltry body was cast at birth?" (1.9.1–2). To be a citizen of the world means to play whatever part one is assigned by the divine administrator and to accept that no preferred

39 Tredinnick 1990, 16, cites *Mem.* 2.1.19, 2.1.28, 2.3.14, 2.6.35, 4.2.16, and 4.5.10.

40 This passage summarizes *Crito* 46b–48a; compare the sentiment here to *Crito* 54b.

indifferent exists for private gain (2.10.1–6; cf. 1.29.44–9). Thus, so long as we have not been ordered to commit vice,⁴¹ it is wholly appropriate to obey kings because they are lords merely over preferred indifferents. “Do you philosophers, then, teach us to despise our kings?—Far from it. Who among us teaches you to dispute their claim to the things over which they have authority? Take my paltry body, take my property, take my reputation, take those who are about me” (1.29.9–10). So, when a student tells Epictetus that the Athenians inflicted suffering upon Socrates, Epictetus replies, “Slave, why do you say ‘Socrates’? Speak of the matter as it really is and say: That the paltry body of Socrates may be carried off ... and that some one may give hemlock to the paltry body of Socrates, and that it may grow cold and die?” (1.29.16).

3.5 *Plato’s Phaedo*

The *Phaedo* is an odd fit for Epictetus. On the one hand, the dialogue resonates with the Stoics’ *psuchê*-body distinction and the thesis that death is nothing to be feared. On the other hand, Epictetus does not mention its central *logoi* about immortality nor the appeal to recollection as the philosopher’s basis for welcoming death. I will first discuss the common ground and then venture two hypotheses concerning Epictetus’ likely appraisal of the arguments for immortality.

A good entry into Epictetus’ use of the *Phaedo* is the soul-body distinction; although the *Phaedo* seems to contain a non-materialist metaphysics, Epictetus is attracted to the distinction as an ethical one. For Epictetus, the soul-body distinction identifies us with one half, our *psuchê*, and only the *psuchê* can be good or bad since it is governed by our volition (*prohairesis*). The body is merely a preferred indifferent. I suspect that Epictetus was influenced by the passage in which Socrates jokes in reply to Crito’s question about his burial. It is only Socrates’ corpse (*nekros*) that can be buried, not Socrates himself, not his *psuchê* (*Phd.* 115c–d). Epictetus echoes this joke in his reply to an imagined interlocutor who threatens to put him in chains: “What is that you say, man? fetter *me*? My leg you will fetter, but my *prohairesis* not even Zeus himself has power to overcome. ‘I will throw you into prison.’ My paltry body (*sômatîon*), rather!” (1.1.23–4). Epictetus also seems to echo the morbid analogy for the body as a *nekros* when he says that “You are a little soul (*psucharion*) carrying around a corpse (*nekron*)” (fr. 26).⁴²

41 Cf. Epictetus’ refusal of the imperial order that philosophers shave their beards (1.2.28–9), an order he finds to be an assault upon his role as a philosopher. See also Socrates’ disobedience of the 30 tyrants (*Ap.* 32c–e).

42 Cf. 1.1.9 and 1.9.19 for the body as a *nekros* and 1.9.33–4 for the body as a carcass or *ptôma*.

Consequently, if the *psuchê* (including *prohairesis*) is who we really are and it is the source of virtue while the body is a mere carcass, the proper valuation of each is contained therein. *Prohairesis* is the locus of virtue but also the only thing up to us. Epictetus believes, quite intriguingly, that that these features of *prohairesis* are signaled by Socrates writing paeans in prison (*Phd.* 60d). In this way, Epictetus seems to draw a very different lesson than the one stated in the *Phaedo*. Socrates of the *Phaedo* justifies his poetry compositions as his response to a dream's summons to cultivate *mousikê* (60e); he further explains why it would be surprising for him to write paeans since poets compose fables (*muthoi*), not (philosophic) arguments (*logoi*; 61b). By contrast, Epictetus admires Socrates' serenity and he explains it thus: "Never lay claim to anything that is not your own. A platform and a prison is each a place (*topos*), the one high, and the other low; but your *prohairesis* can be kept the same, if you wish to keep it the same, in either place. And then we shall be emulating Socrates, when we are able to write paeans in prison" (2.6.25–6; cf. 4.4.22). Epictetus goes on to mock those without Socrates' perspective, how they could neither compose nor listen to paeans because they would be convinced that they are in dire circumstances awaiting execution (2.6.27).

In contrast to the *psuchê*, the body is paltry or "little" (1.25.24, 1.29.16, and 2.2.10). The "little body" is merely a preferred indifferent and thus we should not be upset about its loss; its life or death is not up to us. Once we recognize that we have no control over the fate of our body, Epictetus says, we must not groan in the face of death; rather, we will see that nothing prevents us from cheerfully heading off into exile (1.1.21–5). Thus, Epictetus relates, Socrates understood the jailor's tears for him because the jailor was ignorant about the true meaning of death; but, he criticizes his companions for their tears since they should know better (*Phd.* 116d–117d; *Disc.* 1.29.65).

On this basis, "Socrates did well to call all such things [i.e., death] 'bugbears'" (*Disc.* 2.1.15; see *Phd.* 77e).⁴³ Epictetus explains that death is a bugbear to those who are ignorant. "For just as masks appear fearful and terrible to children because of inexperience, in some such manner we also are affected by events, and, for the same reason, children are affected by bugbears. For what is a child? Ignorance. What is a child? Want of instruction. For where a child has knowledge, he is no worse than we are" (*ibid.*). Elsewhere, Epictetus appeals to the cognitive theory of emotions. "It is not the things themselves that disturb men, but their judgments about these things. For example, death is nothing

43 See Erler 2007 for a detailed discussion of the *Phaedo*'s treatment of the fear of death and *Disc.* 2.1.

dreadful, or else Socrates too would have thought so, but the judgment that death is *dreadful*, this is the dreadful thing" (*Ench.* 5).

From his distinction between *prohairesis* (what is up to us) *contra* the body (what is *not* up to us), Epictetus naturally associates *prohairesis* with true freedom and he identifies investment in the body with slavery. He uses this dichotomy to make sense of Socrates' dramatic claim that "the aim of those who practice philosophy in the proper manner is to practice for dying and death" (*Phd.* 64a). Epictetus explains that human beings will go to any length for the sake of freedom but they mistake the location of that freedom; once we release ourselves from enslavement to externals, we can, "as Plato says, study not merely to die, but even to be tortured on the rack" (4.1.172).

On these grounds, Epictetus believes that we can explain why Socrates died so nobly (2.16.35). What, then, do we say about the arguments Plato gives for Socrates' noble demeanor in the face of death, arguments for the immortality of the soul? It is possible that Epictetus felt free to ignore them or that he found them to be harmless because they do not, in fact, pin our hope on personal immortality; in none of the arguments of the *Phaedo* do our individual memories survive. Or, perhaps Epictetus held them to be inconclusive (cf. *Phd.* 107b).⁴⁴ But, I think we reasonably expect more of a response from Epictetus given his materialistic account of death (4.7.15–16).

Thus, some scholars have hypothesized that Epictetus might have accepted the arguments for immortality in the sense of the Stoic position that the *psuchê* of the sage does persist for a time after death, at least until the great conflagration.⁴⁵ But, even there, the individual souls of the sages must be destroyed for, as Epictetus says, Zeus is alone at the great conflagration (3.13.4–8). But, if I may speculate freely for a moment, I would suggest that the *Phaedo*'s arguments for immortality do, in some broad sense, apply to the single, living cosmic fire that is Nature or Zeus. The argument from opposites (70c–72e) does not show personal survival; it merely shows that living and dead things are constantly recycled. Epictetus could easily accept that observation. The argument from recollection (72e–78b) only shows some kind of pre-existence responsible for our knowledge of forms. For Epictetus, that previously existing thing is Nature and Nature is assuredly responsible for our innate preconceptions; such preconceptions seem to work in a fashion similar to Forms (see 2.17.5–13, discussed above). The argument from composites

44 Epictetus seems comfortable leaving some philosophic matters unresolved such as the so-called Master Argument, a logical puzzle that exercised the Stoics and Megarians (2.19.1–6).

45 See Erler 2007, 107–9.

(78b–80d) only shows that, if there is something truly singular and without parts, it cannot be broken down. Again, Epictetus could accept that inference. And, the final argument for immortality (102b–107b) revises the account of opposites such that there is life-giving substance that is pressed upon a passive matter (at which juncture “death” retreats). This framework can, broadly speaking, be aligned with the Stoic account of nature which entails an active element (cosmic fire) and a passive recipient.⁴⁶ And, this single cosmic fire (God)—of which we are transitory pieces—is indeed immortal.

4 The Syncretic Socrates

At the outset, I stated my aim to reconstruct Socrates as Epictetus understood him and to make the account as defensible as possible. With Epictetus’ complete account in hand, it remains for me briefly to defend Epictetus’ syncretic methodology. This approach was probably a part of his philosophic temperament, but I also suggest that it serves his aim of affirming Socrates’ rightful station as a role model. By synthesizing the available reports about Socrates’ method, mission, and life, Epictetus supplies us with vivid material to answer the question, “What would Socrates do?” (*Ench.* 33.12). Epictetus did not aim to be a faithful historian and his citations are not always exact (e.g., he misremembers *Ap.* 27a–28a as being an exchange with Anytus), but he did aim at a consistent account.

Moreover, Epictetus’ syncretic approach serves to explain the most surprising element in his reception of Socrates: “Did not Socrates write (*egraphen*)?—Yes, who wrote as much as he?” (2.1.32). Epictetus’ claim is often ignored in the literature perhaps because it is almost a proverb in the ancient sources that Socrates did not write. In so far as scholars have addressed Epictetus’ startling claim, there have been three main strategies: (1) dismissal of Epictetus, (2) textual emendation, (3) reinterpretation of what Epictetus meant by “Socrates writes.”⁴⁷ Of the three, this last is most constructive. Oldfather (1925) proposes that perhaps Socrates engaged in a form of journaling (217); Long (2002) suggests that Epictetus is not being literal but rather “may well be alluding to Socrates’ definition of solitary thinking as ‘writing in one’s soul’ (*Phlb.* 39a)” (73).

It is curious, however, that Epictetus is not taken at his word because the passage immediately goes on to answer our surprise. “But how [did

⁴⁶ See Long and Sedley 1987, 44B.

⁴⁷ My discussion here is indebted to Franek 2012 although the solution I propose is my own.

Socrates write]? Since he could not have always at hand someone to test his judgments, or to be tested by him in turn, he was in the habit of testing and examining himself, and was always in a practical way trying out some particular preconception (*prolēpsin*). That is how a philosopher writes ..." (2.1.32–3). Accordingly, it is obvious that Epictetus' Socrates was not writing "for publication" (in the ancient sense of writing to be copied or read aloud by others) but simply for himself. I therefore suggest a merger of Oldfather's and Long's proposals. Socrates did indeed write on parchments or tablets but he did so in order to test his preconceptions and then to firmly imprint them upon his soul.

This sort of journal writing supplies yet another way in which Socrates was a role model for Epictetus because Epictetus himself did not write; the *Discourses* and the *Encheiridion* are from the pen of his pupil, Arrian. If Epictetus did write, it must have been in just the same way he proposes for Socrates. Indeed, with the exception of the teacher's role (held by Epictetus but not by Socrates), Epictetus endeavored to live quite like his syncretic Socrates: Socrates refuted others without embroidery; he advised others; he knew *theôrēmata* but rejected *theôrēmatia*; he wrote but did not "publish." Whether one finds Epictetus' synthesis plausible or not, he surely deserves credit for his ability to blend the reports. And, he equally deserves credit for living the Socratic mission to exhort us to self-knowledge and thus to virtue.

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Socratic Themes in the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius

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Although Marcus Aurelius refers to Socrates only a handful of times in the *Meditations*, and often only to name him as an example of an illustrious figure now long dead, this chapter argues that there is a distinctive Socratic character to the philosophical project that we see at work in Marcus' notebook writings. In those few places where Marcus does invoke Socrates it is usually in connection with one of the central preoccupations of the *Meditations*, in particular the notion of taking care of oneself, the primacy of virtue, and the need for self-control. Moreover, Marcus' practice of writing to himself may also be seen as a Socratic enterprise, when approached in the light of a suggestive passage from Epictetus. This chapter examines Marcus' knowledge of Socrates and the sources he used, and explores the Socratic themes in the *Meditations* noted above. Although Marcus does not explicitly say much about Socrates, I suggest that he probably considered the *Meditations* to embody a deeply Socratic project.

1 Introduction

Marcus Aurelius mentions Socrates a dozen or so times in the *Meditations*.¹ To these explicit references we can add a few quotations from the Socrates of Plato's dialogues where he is not named.² Of these few scattered references to Socrates, some merely name him in a list of illustrious people who are now dead:

1 The full list is *Med.* 1.16, 3.3, 3.6, 6.47, 7.19, 7.66 (thrice), 8.3, 11.23, 11.25, 11.28 (twice), and 11.39 (cf. Rigo 2010, 196–7). Note also the reference at 10.31 to Σωκρατικός which Farquharson 1944 and Hard 2011 translate as “a follower of Socrates” (cf. Hammond 2006: “in Socrates' circle”), but Haines 1916, Staniforth 1964, and Hays 2003 take it to be a proper name, “Socraticus.”

2 These are *Med.* 7.44, 7.45, and 7.46.

Heraclitus, after many speculations about fire which should consume the Universe, was waterlogged by dropsy, poulticed himself with cow-dung and died. Vermin killed Democritus; another kind of vermin Socrates. What is the moral? You went on board, you set sail, you have made the port.³

M. Aur. *Med.* 3.3

... so many grave philosophers, Heraclitus, Pythagoras, and Socrates; so many heroes of old, captains and kings of later days.

Med. 6.47

How many a Chrysippus, a Socrates, an Epictetus has Eternity already sucked down!

Med. 7.19

Alexander, Julius Caesar, and Pompeius, what are they by comparison with Diogenes, Heraclitus, and Socrates?

Med. 8.3

These passing mentions make up a third of the total references to Socrates in the *Meditations*. The first three passages simply highlight that even great men will die. The fourth is part of a passage that argues that the life of a philosopher is preferable to that of a great political leader because it is more autonomous and involves fewer external demands. None says anything substantive about Socrates except to count him among one of the great philosophers of the past.

Putting these passages to one side, we are left with only a handful of places where Marcus Aurelius mentions Socrates. At first glance, then, it looks as if Marcus has little to say about Socrates and, by extension, did not owe him any great debt. Indeed, Marcus and Socrates look as if they embody two quite different images of the philosopher. Socrates was preoccupied with debate, discussion, argument, criticism, and the cross-examination of others. This was a live activity between different people, whether it be conducted in the marketplace or, as nowadays, in a seminar room. Marcus had a quite different outlook: a solitary, introspective, reflective thinker; a private writer of philosophy rather than a participant in oral debates, writing to and for himself. In what follows I shall suggest that, despite this apparent difference in outlook, there is in fact a strong Socratic current running through the *Meditations*, and a close look at those few places where Marcus does engage with Socrates

3 Translations from Farquharson 1944 throughout, occasionally modified.

explicitly will help to bring this into view. I shall also suggest, with reference to a passage in Epictetus, that there is another way in which Marcus may have taken inspiration from Socrates when writing the *Meditations*. In order to support these claims we first need to gain a clearer sense of what Marcus may have known about Socrates.

2 Sources

What did Marcus Aurelius know about Socrates? What could he have known, writing as he was over half a millennium after Socrates' death? From where did he draw his information? The two authors from whom Marcus quotes most often in the *Meditations* are Epictetus and Plato, both of course celebrated for their portraits of Socrates.⁴

2.1 *Epictetus*

Marcus' debt to Epictetus is well known. He himself reports that he borrowed from the library of his friend Rusticus a copy of the notes (ὑπομνήματα) of Epictetus,⁵ a term that Arrian uses in his preface to his record of Epictetus' lectures that we now know as the *Discourses* (Διατριβαί).⁶ Marcus quotes from the four surviving books of the *Discourses* and he preserves a number of otherwise unknown passages from Epictetus, presumably deriving from now lost books of the same work.⁷ Indeed, he quotes from Epictetus more often than he does any other author.⁸ Given this, it seems reasonable to suppose

4 The distinctions between exact quotation, paraphrase, and allusion are not always clear. The authors whom Marcus draws on most frequently in the *Meditations* are Epictetus, Euripides, Heraclitus, and Plato. According to Rigo 2010, 339–44, he does so 10, 7, 4, and 5 times respectively; Hammond 2006, 222–4, who includes looser allusions, suggests 12, 7, 12, and 17 times respectively. Either way, Epictetus and Plato both figure in the three most cited authors in the *Meditations*.

5 See *Med.* 1.7 (test. 11 Schenkl 1916).

6 Arr. *Epict. diss.* Praef. 2. Subsequent references to the *Discourses* take the form: Epictetus, *Diss.*

7 It is generally thought that Arrian's *Discourses of Epictetus* originally comprised eight books. This is based on the statement in Phot. *Bibl. cod.* 58 (17b11–20 = test. 6 Schenkl 1916). Aulus Gellius' reference to (and quotation from) Book 5 is also often noted (*NA* 19.1.14 = fr. 9 Schenkl 1916). Photius also mentions another work in twelve books (*ibid.*), although this is usually assumed to be mistaken. See further Souilhé 1975, xi–xix.

8 See Rigo 2010, 339–44. The full list is: *Diss.* 1.28.4 (in *Med.* 7.63), *Diss.* 3.22.105 (in *Med.* 11.36), *Diss.* 3.24.86–7 (in *Med.* 11.33), *Diss.* 3.24.88 (in *Med.* 11.34), *Diss.* 3.24.91–2 (in *Med.* 11.35), *Diss.* 4.6.20 (in *Med.* 7.36). In addition, *Med.* 11.37, 11.38, and 11.39 are fr. 27, 28, and 28a in Schenkl

that Epictetus' portrait of Socrates would have been an important influence on Marcus' own image of him.

Socrates was an important role model for Epictetus, who regularly referred to him (alongside Diogenes the Cynic) as an exemplary figure.⁹ Epictetus also shared with previous Stoics an admiration for a variety of Socratic doctrines, such as the identification of virtue with knowledge, the unity of the virtues, and the necessity (and indeed sufficiency) of virtue for a good life.¹⁰ Equally important, as A.A. Long has brought out, Epictetus was deeply Socratic in his whole approach to philosophical education.¹¹ The *Discourses* recorded by Arrian do not contain sermons or diatribes but rather Socratic conversations in which the lead protagonist acts as a moral guide. Like Socrates, Epictetus can be self-deprecating in his claims to knowledge, displays limited interest in natural philosophy, and is most concerned with how he and his interlocutors can lead a good life. Like the Platonic dialogues, Epictetus' discussions sometimes involve youthful students but on other occasions include confrontations with older and often important individuals who already possess firmly held beliefs. In both cases Epictetus subjects them to Socratic cross-examination. In sum, Socrates influenced both the form and the content of the *Discourses* and stands as an idealized image of the sort of person that Epictetus and his pupils aspire to become. If Marcus read Epictetus, as we know he did, he could not have failed to have been impressed by the image of Socrates he found therein which, as Long notes, appears or is alluded to "on every other page."¹²

Epictetus' own knowledge of Socrates appears to have drawn heavily on Plato. He read widely among the dialogues and drew on the *Alcibiades*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Philebus*, *Timaeus*, and *Laws*.¹³ However, Socrates is typically abstracted from his Platonic context and presented as a Stoic role model. There are also numerous things that Epictetus attributes to Socrates that are not attested in the Platonic dialogues or the works of Xenophon, opening up the possibility that he also had access to other Socratic

1916. Not mentioned by Rigo are fr. 26 Schenkl, from *Med.* 4.41, and fr. 28b (added by Oldfather 1925–28), from *Med.* 4.49.

9 On the Socratic character of Epictetus' thought, see Johnson (in this volume), as well as Long 2000 and Long 2002; note also Gourinat 2001. On Epictetus' references to Diogenes the Cynic (and how they compare with his remarks about Socrates) see Schofield 2007; note also Billerbeck 1978.

10 On Socratic elements in Stoicism more widely, see, e.g., Long 1988 and Striker 1994.

11 See Long 2000 and, at greater length, 2002.

12 Long 2000, 85.

13 For a full list of passages, see Jagu 1946, 161–2.

material now lost.¹⁴ In the present context, though, that is a question we must put to one side.

Among Marcus' explicit statements about Socrates we find the following at the end of Book 11:

Socrates used to say: "What do you want? To have souls of rational or irrational beings?" "Rational." "What rational beings, sound or inferior?" "Sound." "Why don't you seek them?" "Because we have them." "Why then do you fight and disagree?"

Med. 11.39 (= *SSR* I C 545)

This passage, as Rutherford notes, has no parallel in Plato or Xenophon but there is nothing un-Socratic about it.¹⁵ Giannantoni lists it as an independent testimonium for Socrates. It is worth noting, though, that it follows after a string of quotations from Epictetus.¹⁶ The compressed dialogic form is also reminiscent of numerous exchanges in the *Discourses*. Perhaps this comes from one of the lost books of the *Discourses*? A number of editors of Marcus Aurelius have suggested just this.¹⁷ If so, it is an example of Marcus making use of Epictetus' portrayal of Socrates.

2.2 *Plato*

Like Epictetus, Marcus also drew on Plato. He quotes from Plato a number of times and readers have pointed to further allusions to passages from the

14 For a complete list of Socratic testimonia in Epictetus not paralleled in the extant sources, see the texts assembled in *SSR* I C 515–29.

15 See Rutherford 1989, 181.

16 Thus *Med.* 11.33 = *Diss.* 3.24.87 (not verbatim); *Med.* 11.34 = *Diss.* 3.24.88; *Med.* 11.35 = *Diss.* 3.24.91; *Med.* 11.36 = *Diss.* 3.22.105; *Med.* 11.37 = Epictetus fr. 27 Schenkl; *Med.* 11.38 = Epictetus fr. 28 Schenkl. Our passage here, *Med.* 11.39, may simply be a continuation of the preceding passage, *Med.* 11.38, and so a continuation of Epictetus fr. 28 rather than an independent text. The division between 11.38 and 11.39 dates back only to Thomas Gataker's edition of 1652; in earlier editions, including the *editio princeps* of 1559 and Meric Casaubon's edition of 1643, they are treated as a single text. See further Sellars 2018, 333.

17 See, e.g., Leopold 1908, loc. cit. ("locus omnino inter fragm. Epicteti recipiendus"); Trannoy 1925, 134; Theiler 1951, 344; Dalfen 1987, 106. Schenkl 1894 omitted it from his collection of the fragments of Epictetus but, in the light of Leopold's remark, added it in Schenkl 1916. Although Farquharson 1944, 418, appears to agree, later, at 881, he says "there is no adequate ground" for taking it to be a fragment of Epictetus. On the status of this fragment, see Sellars 2018.

dialogues.¹⁸ Of particular interest is a series of quotations in Book 7 of the *Meditations*:

But I should have a right answer to give him, as follows: "You speak unadvisedly, my friend, if you fancy that a man who is worth anything ought to take the risk of life or death into account, and not to consider only one thing, when he is acting, whether he does what is right or wrong, the actions of a good man or a bad."

Med. 7.44, quoting Pl. *Ap.* 28b

For really and truly, men of Athens, the matter stands like this: wherever a man takes post, believing it to be the best, or is posted by his captain, there he ought, as I think, to remain and abide the risk, taking into account nothing, whether death or anything else, in comparison with dishonor.

Med. 7.45, quoting Pl. *Ap.* 28d.

But, consider, my friend, whether possibly high spirit and virtue are not something other than saving one's life and being saved. Perhaps a man who is really a man must leave on one side the question of living as long as he can, and must not love his life, but commit these things to God, and, believing the woman's proverb that no one ever escaped his destiny, must consider, with that in his mind, how he may live the best possible life in the time that is given to live.

Med. 7.46, quoting Pl. *Grg.* 512d

In these three passages Marcus quotes from Plato's Socrates and was evidently drawn to them by their shared theme: acting rightly is more important than mere survival. These are the only places where Marcus explicitly draws on Plato for accounts of Socrates. While some of Marcus' other remarks about Socrates have loose parallels with passages in Plato's dialogues, they could equally have come from others sources that make similar remarks, not least Epictetus.¹⁹ Even so, it seems reasonable to suppose that Plato's dialogues, just as they are for us, were central in shaping Marcus' image of Socrates.

18 See n. 4 above.

19 See, e.g., *Med.* 11.23 (*SSR* I C 542), for which editors have pointed to Pl. *Phd.* 77e, although the connection is thin, and *Diss.* 2.1.15, which is an equally plausible source. Note also *Med.* 7.63 where Marcus appears to paraphrase Plato (*Soph.* 228c), but is probably quoting the paraphrase by Epictetus (*Diss.* 1.28.4).

2.3 *Other Sources*

Marcus mentions Xenophon only once and makes no use of his Socratic writings.²⁰ He also quotes Antisthenes once, but without naming him, and we only know that the line in question is from Antisthenes because Epictetus also quotes it.²¹ It seems likely, then, that Epictetus was Marcus' immediate source here and that Marcus did not know Antisthenes' Socratic works directly. More intriguing is a passage from Book 7 that deserves to be quoted in full:

How do we know that Telauges was not in character superior to Socrates? It is not enough that Socrates won more glory by his death, argued more fluently with the sophists, spent the whole frosty night in the open with more endurance, thought it braver to refuse, when ordered to arrest Leon of Salamis, and "carried his head high in the streets" (a trait in regard to which one might question whether it was true). No, we have to consider this: what kind of soul Socrates had, whether he could be content with being just in his dealings with men and righteous in his dealing with the gods, whether he was neither hastily indignant with wickedness nor a servant to any man's ignorance, whether he neither accepted as unfamiliar anything assigned by Universal Nature or endured it as intolerable, nor submitted his mind to be affected by the affections of the flesh.

Med. 7.66 (= *SSR* I C 541; VI A 87)

Editors have noted a number of parallels between parts of this passage and other Socratic sources, in particular Plato.²² The phrase "carried his head high in the streets" could come from the *Clouds* of Aristophanes.²³ But there may be another source standing behind this passage. Who was the Telauges who is being compared with Socrates? According to tradition he was the son of Pythagoras and possibly the teacher of Empedocles.²⁴ He was also the title character of a now lost Socratic dialogue by Aeschines.²⁵ It appears as if that dialogue involved a debate between Socrates and Telauges, who was presented

20 See *Med.* 10.31.

21 See *Med.* 7.36 and Epictetus, *Diss.* 4.6.20 (both *SSR* v A 86).

22 Farquharson 1944, 142, notes parallels with *Symp.* 221b and *Ap.* 32d.

23 Compare ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς ἐβρενθύετο with *Nub.* 362, ὅτι βρενθύει τ' ἐν ταῖσιν ὁδοῖς, and cf. Pl. *Symp.* 221b.

24 See DL 8.43. See further Macris 2016.

25 See DL 2.61 (= *SSR* VI A 22). The surviving evidence is gathered together in *SSR* VI A 83–90. Note also the older collections in Krauss 1911 (where *Med.* 7.66 = vest. 21) and Dittmar 1912 (where *Med.* 7.66 = fr. 45). For further discussion of the *Telauges*, see Krauss 1911, 102–13 and Dittmar 1912, 213–44, and the summary of their views in Farquharson 1944, 749–50. Note also, more recently, Lampe 2015, 67–8.

as a scruffy ascetic Pythagorean, with Aeschines hoping to present Socrates as the superior figure by referring to incidents from Socrates' life.²⁶ Marcus' response was to say that Socrates' real superiority came from the excellence of his soul rather than the outward appearance of a Cynic-like lifestyle.

Is it possible that Marcus read Aeschines' Socratic dialogues? Our other sources for the *Telauges* are relatively late and include Proclus and Priscian, so it may not be impossible. The apparent allusions to Plato and Aristophanes in this passage could equally have their origin in Aeschines instead. Ultimately we just do not know, but this passage does open up the possibility that Marcus had access to and made use of a wider range of Socratic material than has come down to us today.

Finally we might note a handful of references to Socrates in the correspondence between Fronto and Marcus. In the letters we see Fronto writing to the young Marcus extolling the virtues of Socrates in both wisdom and eloquence.²⁷ Although the few passing references that survive do not add much in the way of content, they do suggest that the figure of Socrates was presented to Marcus as a role model during the formative years of his education.

2.4 *Summary*

It seems likely that Marcus' image of Socrates as an exemplary figure relied quite heavily on the similar image we find in Epictetus. Epictetus' famous exhortation, "if you are not yet a Socrates, still you ought to live as one who wishes to be a Socrates,"²⁸ could easily stand as a summary of the role that Socrates plays for Marcus: an exemplary model of a philosophical life. Although Marcus did draw on Plato, as indeed Epictetus had done, the Socrates we find in the *Meditations* is what we might call a Stoicized role model; that is, an exemplar of virtue rather than a questioning gadfly.

Beyond Marcus' primary interest in Socrates as a philosophical role model we should also note a few places where he refers to anecdotes about Socrates that suggest an interest in the man himself:

Socrates used to call the opinions of the multitude "Bogies," things to frighten children.

Med. 11.23 (= *SSR* I C 542)

26 Here I follow Farquharson 1944, 363–4 and 749–50. Cf. *Ath.* 5.220a–b (= *SSR* VI A 84). *Demetr. Eloc.* 291 (= *SSR* VI A 89) suggests that Aeschines' portrait of Telauges was deliberately ambiguous and could be taken as either mockery or admiration.

27 See, e.g., Fronto, *Ep. ad M. Caes.* 3.16 (Van Den Hout 1988, 48; cf. Haines 1919–20, 1.100–2).

28 *Epict. Ench.* 51.3 (tr. Oldfather 1925–28).

Socrates' message to Perdiccas to excuse a visit to his court: "to avoid," he said, "coming to a most unfortunate end, that is, to be treated handsomely and not to have the power to return it."

Med. 11.25 (= *SSR* I C 543)

What a man Socrates was in his under garment only, when Xanthippe took his upper garment and went out; and what he said to the friends who were shocked and returned when they saw him in that dress.

Med. 11.28 (= *SSR* I C 544)

Some editors have tried to find Platonic sources for these passages; Giannantoni lists them as testimonia in their own right. Putting the question of sources to one side, they illustrate that Marcus had an interest in Socrates the man and the stories about him alongside his idealization of him as a sage.

3 Themes

We now have a clearer sense of the sources for and influences on Marcus' image of Socrates. As I have already noted, there are only a handful of passages where Marcus discusses Socrates directly. Yet in those few places Marcus connects Socrates with topics that are in fact central to the *Meditations* as a whole. We might take this to be Marcus reminding himself in his private notebook of the Socratic provenance of these key ideas. Alternatively he might be invoking Socrates as a role model to inspire himself to further self-improvement. Ultimately we do not know, but even so these passing references help to highlight the Socratic character of Marcus' own philosophical project. In what follows I shall focus on what I take to be three central and closely interconnected themes.

3.1 *Care of Oneself*

One of the central themes in Socrates' philosophy is the idea of taking care of oneself (ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ).²⁹ In the *Apology* Plato famously has Socrates say:

Are you not ashamed that you give your attention to acquiring as much money as possible, and similarly with reputation and honor, and give no

²⁹ On this theme in Socrates' philosophy, which a number of commentators have described as his central preoccupation, see Sellars 2003, 36–9 (with further references). In recent years it has received renewed attention in the wake of the work of Michel Foucault; see Foucault 1997, 281–301.

attention or thought to truth and understanding and the perfection of your soul?³⁰

Pl. *Ap.* 29d–e

A little later he repeats the same thought:

For I spend all my time going about trying to persuade you, young and old, to make your first and chief concern not for your bodies nor your possessions, but for the highest welfare of your souls.

Ap. 30a–b

This is Socrates' god-given mission: to encourage himself and others to undertake self-examination with a view to improving the condition of their souls. As we have already seen, Marcus quotes from the *Apology* himself; in fact he quotes two passages that come immediately before the ones just cited. In the passages chosen by Marcus, Socrates emphasizes that his mission to take care of his soul and to encourage others to do the same ought not to be compromised in the face of danger or even death (*Ap.* 28b and 28d, quoted above). It would be better to die than to live a life in which the excellence of one's soul has been corrupted. A similar thought is expressed in Marcus' third quotation from Plato's Socrates that follows immediately after these two from the *Apology* (*Grg.* 512d, quoted above).

This Socratic theme of care of oneself is a central preoccupation in the *Meditations*. Marcus' project there is explicitly to take care of himself. In the *Alcibiades* (127d–130c), Socrates drew a distinction between the body (σῶμα) and the soul (ψυχή), insisting that to take care of oneself involves taking care of the soul, the body being merely an instrument of the soul. Marcus draws a similar distinction, in his case tripartite, between flesh (σαρκία), spirit (πνεῦμα), and governing part (ἡγεμονικόν).³¹ Like Socrates he sets aside the body, suggesting that we ought to devote ourselves to the cultivation of the governing part of the soul. Following Epictetus, Marcus insists that in order to live well all we need do is master the ruling reason within us, located in the governing part (e.g., *Med.* 2.5). In particular he insists, again following Epictetus, that we ought to pay less attention to what goes on in the souls of other people and instead focus our attention on taking care of our own soul (e.g., *Med.* 2.8, 2.13). In the present context it is worth noting that as well as using the Epictetean term

³⁰ I quote the translation in Hamilton and Cairns 1961.

³¹ See *Med.* 2.2; also 3.16, 7.16, 12.3. Marcus is not always consistent in his use of terminology for the three parts, on which see Gill 2013, 88–9.

ἡγεμονικόν, more or less interchangeably with reason (λόγος), Marcus also uses δαίμων, perhaps as a nod towards the Socratic character of the task at hand (e.g., *Med.* 3.12). Indeed, Marcus is explicit that his turn inwards was inspired by Socrates:

But if nothing higher is revealed than the very divinity (δαίμων) seated within you, subordinating your private impulses to itself, examining your thoughts, having withdrawn itself, as Socrates used to say,³² from the sense-affections, and subordinated itself to the gods and making men its first care; if you find all else to be smaller and cheaper than this, give no room to anything else, to which when once you incline and turn, you will no longer have the power without a struggle to prefer in honor that which is your own, your peculiar good.

Med. 3.6

Marcus' writing "to himself" is itself part of this project of taking care of oneself. It is an act of self-examination and self-exhortation of the sort recommended by earlier Stoics such as Seneca, and undertaken through the process of writing.³³ But Marcus makes no mention of Seneca; his point of reference is Socrates. Where he differs from Socrates is that his concern is almost exclusively with taking care of himself rather than exhorting others to do the same. Marcus' project is Socratic in the sense that he takes up Socrates' injunction, but he does not take on the role of Socratic educator himself.³⁴ That should of course come as no surprise given that we are dealing with a private text not intended for wider circulation. Marcus is only writing for himself.

3.2 *Virtue*

Closely related to care of oneself is the importance attached to virtue (ἀρετή) by both Marcus and Socrates. Indeed, the task of taking care of oneself is ultimately the same as the task of cultivating virtue insofar as both aim at a soul in an excellent state. This comes through very clearly in the passage quoted earlier in which Marcus compares Socrates with the Pythagorean

32 The phrase "as Socrates used to say" has been taken variously as a reference to Pl. *Phd.* 83a–83b (Gill 2013, 110), *Ti.* 61d (Trannoy 1925, 22), and Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.12.15 (Farquharson 1944, 42; Dalfen 1987, 18).

33 See, e.g., Sen. *De Ira* 3.36.1–3, although here the focus is on daily self-examination only and he does not explicitly mention writing. On the theme of self-writing more widely, see Foucault 1997, 207–22.

34 Compare with Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.15, where Epictetus also focuses attention on self-care and discourages excessive concern about the mental states of others.

Telauges (*Med.* 7.66, above). If Socrates was superior to Telauges, it was due to the excellence of his soul and the virtuous actions that emanated from it.

It was virtue, then, and nothing else that made Socrates a figure worthy of emulation. Marcus displays little interest in other characteristics usually associated with Plato's Socrates, such as his irony or erotic relationships. This is the sense in which Marcus operates with a Stoicized image of Socrates, inherited from Epictetus. The primacy of virtue is a recurrent theme in the *Meditations*, although Marcus often refers to specific virtues, and in particular justice (δικαιοσύνη), rather than referring to virtue in the abstract.³⁵ Our guide when acting must always be justice, Marcus insists (*Med.* 4.12). A central part of justice is patience (ἀνέχεσθαι), and in particular patience in the face of the actions of others given that (echoing Socrates) all wrongdoing is involuntary (e.g., *Med.* 4.3.2; also 4.26, 7.22, 7.26). Our central concern ought to be a just frame of mind and actions for the sake of the common good rather than anything external such as reputation or posthumous fame (*Med.* 4.33). Marcus continually reminds himself that a virtuous disposition is the highest—indeed only—good, while death, reputation, and material goods are irrelevant concerns (e.g., *Med.* 6.2). In one passage he contrasts this view with that of the majority of people:

You could apprehend the character of what the majority of men fancy to be “goods” like this. If a man were to conceive the existence of real goods, like wisdom, temperance, justice, fortitude, he could not with those in his mind still listen to the popular proverb about “goods in every corner,” for it will not fit. But with what appear to the majority of men to be goods in his mind he will listen to and readily accept what the comic poet said as an appropriate witticism.³⁶

Med. 5.12

There is a clear contrast obvious to all, Marcus suggests, between the (real) goods of the soul and (only apparent) material goods. In this he is simply following standard Stoic doctrine.³⁷ But, as we have seen, he explicitly associates the idea with Socrates rather than referring to one of the early Stoics. That ought to come as no great surprise given that the Stoics both emulated

35 In *Med.* 11.10 the primacy of justice for Marcus is made explicit when he suggests that all the other virtues spring from it. See also *Med.* 8.39.

36 The allusion is to a passage in Menander that refers to someone who has so many material goods that “he has no room left to shit”; see further Gill 2013, 153–4.

37 On the early Stoic theory of value, see the texts collected in *SVF* 3.68–116; note also Long and Sedley 1987, 1.368–74 (§60).

Socrates on this point and drew on his arguments for the claim that virtue is sufficient for a good life.³⁸ For present purposes, though, the point worth noting is that Marcus associated the doctrine with Socrates.

3.3 *Self-Control*

The third theme, closely related to the previous two, is what we might call self-control. Marcus often presents his project to take care of himself, which involves the cultivation of virtue, as one that involves greater self-mastery that will ultimately lead to freedom (ἐλευθερος).³⁹

Nature did not so blend you with the compound Whole that she did not permit you to circumscribe yourself and to bring what is its own into submission to itself.

Med. 7.67

Whenever you are obliged by circumstances to be in a way troubled, quickly return to yourself, and do not, more than you are obliged, fall out of step; for you will be more master of the measure by continually returning to it.

Med. 6.11

Marcus sees this focus on self-control as a Socratic virtue. He makes this explicit in the extended eulogy to his adopted father, Antoninus Pius, which comes towards the end of the series of such reminiscences that occupy Book 1:

What is recorded of Socrates would exactly fit him: he could equally be abstinent from or enjoy what many are too weak to abstain from and too self-indulgent in enjoying. To be strong, to endure, and in either case to be sober belong to the man of perfect and invincible spirit.

Med. 1.16 (§§9–10 Farquharson; §§30–31 Dalfen)

Here Marcus could be thinking of the accounts of Socrates in Xenophon (*Mem.* 1.3.14–15) or Plato (*Symp.* 220a–b) where he is presented as indifferent to physical pleasures and pains, with the second more likely given that we know Marcus read at least some Plato. Marcus echoes Socrates' indifference to external circumstances himself when he writes:

38 See further Long 1988 and Striker 1994. In particular compare Pl. *Euthyd.* 278e–281e with DL 7.103–4 (*SVF* 3.117, 119).

39 See, e.g., *Med.* 6.16, 7.67.

Provided you are doing your proper work it should be indifferent to you whether you are cold or comfortably warm, whether drowsy or with sufficient sleep, whether your report is evil or good, whether you are in the act of death or doing something else.

Med. 6.2

The “invincible spirit” (ἀήττητος ψυχή) that Marcus attributes to Antoninus and, by extension, Socrates was a standard feature of the Stoic sage.⁴⁰ Epictetus defines the invincible person as “he whom nothing that is outside the sphere of his moral purpose (προαίρεσις) can dismay.”⁴¹ Elsewhere Epictetus adds that the sage is invincible because his only concern is his moral purpose, which can never be hampered by external forces.⁴² This indifference to external circumstances is of course standard Stoic doctrine and a corollary of the focus on virtue as the only good.⁴³ Like other Stoics before him, Marcus associates this attitude with the figure of Socrates.

3.4 *Summary*

These three Socratic themes run throughout the *Meditations*. In one of the passages mentioning Socrates that we saw earlier, all three come together. For this reason it is worth quoting again, this time more fully:

If you discover in the life of man something higher than justice, truth, temperance, fortitude, and generally speaking than your understanding contented with itself, where it presents you behaving by the rule of right, and satisfied with destiny, in what is assigned to you and is not yours to choose; if, I say, you see something higher than this, turn to it with all your heart and enjoy the supreme good now that it is found. But if nothing higher is revealed than the very divinity seated within you, subordinating your private impulses to itself, as Socrates used to say, from the sense-affections, and subordinated itself to the gods and making men its first care; if you find all else to be smaller and cheaper than this, give no room to anything else, to which when once you incline and turn, you will no longer have the power without a struggle to prefer in honor that which is your own, your peculiar good. For it is not right to set up a rival of another kind to the good of Reason and of the Commonwealth; the

40 See, e.g., Stob. 2.99.19 (*SVF* 1.216), with Hadot and Luna 1998, 46, and Gill 2013, 77.

41 Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.18.21 (tr. Oldfather 1925–28).

42 See Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.6.5–7.

43 See, e.g., the texts in *SVF* 3.117–68; note also Long and Sedley 1987, 1.354–7 (§58).

praise of the multitude, for example, or place or wealth or pleasurable indulgence.

Med. 3.6

Socrates is the guide here in Marcus' affirmation that the highest good is understanding (διδόναι), taken to be the seat of the virtues (justice, temperance), and identified with one's inner god (δαίμων). All impulses (ὁρμαί) ought to be subordinated to this understanding, which should be our first care. Marcus' Socratic project of care of oneself is one that involves the cultivation of virtue combined with intense self-discipline. Here Marcus follows Epictetus in turning to the figure of Socrates as the key point of reference, rather than to an early Stoic such as Zeno or Chrysippus. Although that might seem odd for someone proclaiming to be a Stoic, Stoics had throughout the history of the school turned to precursors such as Socrates and, to a lesser extent, Diogenes of Sinope as idealized role models rather than to the founders of their own school.⁴⁴

4 Socratic Self-Writing

Notwithstanding these Socratic themes in the *Meditations*, Marcus and Socrates might still appear quite different in their wider approach to philosophy, as I noted earlier. While Socrates engages in public, oral cross-examination, Marcus adopts private, written introspection. Yet as we have seen, both were intensely concerned with self-cultivation, even if they went about it in quite different ways. Could Marcus really have seen what he was doing as Socratic in spirit? There is an intriguing passage in Epictetus that might help to shed some light here:

Did not Socrates write?—Yes, who wrote as much as he? But how? Since he could not have always at hand someone to test his judgements, or to be tested by him in turn, he was in the habit of testing and examining himself, and was always in a practical way trying out some particular primary conception. That is what a philosopher writes; but trifling phrases, and “said he,” “said I,” he leaves to others ...

Diss. 2.1.32–3 (= *SSR* I C 519)

44 See Long 1988.

The immediate context of this passage is a warning to students not to prioritize literary composition over moral improvement: produce fine actions, not fine prose. The final line looks like a swipe at Plato, implying that his literary philosophical works fail to live up to the Socratic ideal of philosophy as a lived practice. Strikingly, though, this passage might easily stand as a description of what Marcus was doing in the *Meditations*: testing and examining himself through the medium of writing. If Marcus read this passage it is not difficult to imagine him taking inspiration from it for his own philosophical writing. As Epictetus says, this is how a philosopher ought to write, and this is how Socrates wrote. It is certainly possible that Marcus was familiar with this text.⁴⁵ While modern scholars might doubt the veracity of Epictetus' claim about Socrates,⁴⁶ Marcus may well have taken it at face value. If he did, he may have explicitly modeled the *Meditations* on what he took to be a Socratic model of philosophical writing. We can only conjecture here, and there is no firm evidence to confirm that Marcus conceived his own *Meditations* as an example of the Socratic writing described by Epictetus. But given that Epictetus was an important influence on Marcus, both in general and with regard to his image of Socrates, it seems likely that Marcus would have known this passage. By writing to himself, Epictetus says, Socrates was able to subject himself to the sort of cross-examination he inflicted on others. This was in tune with Socrates' own view that ultimately each person must take care of themselves, for it is not something that anyone can do on his or her behalf.⁴⁷ It is also what we see Marcus doing in the *Meditations*, although there Platonic-Socratic cross-examination is combined with Stoic-Socratic training for virtue. There is no doubt that the content of the *Meditations* was influenced by Socrates; it is possible that the form was inspired by him too.

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45 Some editors have noted a parallel between *Diss.* 2.1.15 (i.e., slightly before this passage, in the same chapter) and *Med.* 11.23. See, e.g., Haines 1916, 315; Trannoy 1925, 132; Theiler 1951, 344; Dalfen 1987, 104.

46 Oldfather 1925–28, 1.222, calls it “a very strange passage.” He notes DL 1.16, which says that according to some people Socrates wrote nothing, the implication being that others in antiquity claimed that he did write. Long 2002, 73, connects the remark with the writing in one's soul mentioned in Pl. *Phlb.* 39a. See also Johnson's suggested explanation (in this volume).

47 Thus Pl. *Ap.* 30a–b, exhorting each person to take care of their own soul.

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Plutarch's Primary Use of the Socratic Paradigm in the *Lives*

Mark Beck

1 Introduction

Plutarch (c. 45–125 CE) is the foremost imperial-era representative of Middle Platonism, a later melange of Academic, Peripatetic, and Stoic thought.¹ His works represent the only surviving corpus of works by a Middle Platonist philosopher that we possess. As a young man, he notably studied with the Academic philosopher Ammonius in Athens. Increasingly, in recent years, research devoted to Plutarch has discerned the strong influence in his writings of many great works by Plato, including the *Apology*, *Republic*, *Georgias*, *Phaedrus*, and *Symposium*. The figure of Socrates looms very large in these Platonic works. Their impact on Plutarch is palpable in the Socratic paradigm that is resurgent in several works.

Plutarch clearly regarded Socrates as the originator of a new form of political action. He associates Socrates with a positive development in leadership. In his treatise on whether old men should engage in politics he singles out Socrates as being the first to “show that life at all times and in all parts, in all experiences and activities, universally admits philosophy” (*An seni* 796d). For Plutarch, “being a statesman is like being a philosopher” (*An seni* 796d). This is the discovery that we owe to Socrates, who expanded the realm of philosophy to include and inform our daily lives. In a powerful passage Plutarch articulates just what the ramifications of this are for correct political action:

So this is what we must understand concerning statesmanship also: that foolish men, even when they are generals or secretaries or public orators, do not act as statesmen, but court the mob, deliver harangues, arouse factions, or under compulsion perform public services; but that the man who is really public-spirited and who loves mankind and the State and is careful of the public welfare and truly statesmanlike, that man, although he never put on a uniform, is always acting as a statesman by urging those

¹ See most recently Dillon 2014, 61–72. The classic statement is still Dillon ²1996, 184–230.

on who have power, guiding those who need guidance, assisting those who are deliberating, reforming those who act wrongly, encouraging those who are right-minded, making it plain that he is not just casually interested in public affairs and that he goes to the assembly or the council, not for the sake of getting the first seat when there is something serious in prospect or he is summoned, but that when he goes there he goes not merely for amusement as if to see or hear a performance, and that even when he is not there in person he is present in thought and through inquiry, thus approving of some of the proceedings and disapproving of others.

Plut. *An seni* 796d

The true statesman, according to Plutarch, has a role as educator of his constituency once he has acquired power and enjoys the people's confidence (*Praec.* 800a–b). At that point he should “train the character of the citizens, leading them gently towards that which is better and treating them with mildness” (*Praec.* 800a–b). In part this entails presenting a personal example of appropriate conduct. In this passage in his treatise on the *Rules of Statecraft* he cites, as positive examples, Themistocles, who ceased his carousing, and Pericles, who adopted a composed and dignified bearing in public (*Praec.* 800B–C).² The ultimate exemplar remains Socrates, however, and an understanding of this helps to explain his presence, through allusion or direct reference, in several *Lives*, in which, from a chronological/historical point of view, he does not belong. The influence of Xenophon is discernible in the statesman's role as educator. Xenophon's Socrates “openly acknowledges that he is a teacher and an educational expert” (*Mem.* 1.6.13–14, 4.2.40, 4.3.1, 4.7.1; *Ap.* 20) in contrast to Plato's Socrates figure who denies being anyone's teacher (*Pl.* *Ap.* 19d and 33a).³ Xenophon's Socrates also admits to training young men in politics, while acknowledging that he himself does not practice politics (*Mem.* 1.6.15, 4.3.1), in contrast to the Platonic Socrates who is mainly concerned with making his fellow citizens better (*Grg.* 521d).⁴ Xenophon's biographical novel of Cyrus the Great, the *Cyropedia*, presents most fully this image of the successful statesman as the educator of his people.⁵

2 For a more extensive account of Socrates in the *Moralia* and the *Life of Alcibiades*, see Pelling 2005a, 105–36.

3 Dorion 2006, 95.

4 Dorion 2006, 95.

5 See most recently Reichel 2007, 32–9 (with bibliography).

2 The Socratic Paradigm in the *Life of Cato the Elder* and *Life of Cato the Younger*

Plutarch employs the figure of Socrates in several *Lives* to bring out aspects of personal conduct and leadership. His literary mission in the *Lives* is the construction of biographies that teach his readership to be good politicians and responsible citizens.⁶ In particular he inserts references to Socrates into two Roman *Lives* to call into question, in an instructive and surprising way, the widely held notion (by contemporary Romans in particular) that both Catos are somehow exemplary. In a way this is a sophisticated extension of his use of *synkrisis* in the *Lives*.⁷ Over the last few decades our perception of Plutarch's compositional strategies has been enriched by a series of studies on the significance of parallelism and thematic continuity in the *Parallel Lives*. Special attention has been given to the *synkriseis*, the brief analeptic essays appended to 22 of the 24 paired *Lives*, which serve to underline the comparative, agonistic nature of Plutarch's biographical technique.⁸ Plutarch figures as the judge in a contest between two well-matched competitors in the arena of life (cf. *Thes.* 1; cf. *Pel.-Marc.* 1; *Sert.-Eum.* 2, etc.).⁹ There are similarities (*homoiotates*) and there are differences (*diaphorai*), but, in the main, significant points of correspondence serve to drive home morally edifying examples drawn from the anachronistic juxtaposing of two complementary behavioral patterns.¹⁰ Their complementary nature is brought out and explored thematically.¹¹ Thematic progression is often detectable, as characteristics and traits that surface in the former, less complex Greek *Life* receive greater elaboration in the subsequent,

6 See now Xenophontos 2016, 126–72; Liebert 2016, 28–40; Jacobs 2018.

7 See most recently Larmour 2014, 405–16, with bibliography.

8 Earlier studies include Focke 1923, 327–68, who still provides the most comprehensive discussion of the *synkrisis* and its agonistic character, and, for Plutarch in particular, see Erbse 1956, 398–424; Stadter 1975, 77–85 = 1995, 155–64; Pelling 1986, 83–96 = 2002, 349–86; Larmour 1992, 4154–200; Bosworth 1992, 56–89; Swain 1992, 101–11; Duff 1999, 243–86; H. Beck 2002, 467–89; Pelling 2005a, 325–40; Larmour 2014.

9 On the choice of heroes, see Geiger 1981, 85–104 = 1995, 165–90; 2002, 93–102; 2005, 231–42.

10 See in particular Pelling 1995, 205–20 = 2002, 237–51; Frazier 1996; Stadter 1997, 65–81; Duff 1999. As noted by Pelling (1986, 85 = 2002, 350), the *Lives of Philopoemen and Flamininus* is the only pair in which Plutarch contrasts coevals.

11 Stadter 1996, 291–303.

more complex Roman *Life*.¹² In some cases these themes are introduced in the proems to the paired *Lives*.¹³

More recently attention has been paid to internal *synkriseis*. Most of these studies have focused on naturally occurring historical juxtapositions that employ one or more individuals as foils to set off interesting aspects of the main protagonist's behavior. Recently, Hans Beck has pointed out the implicit intertextual comparisons inherent in neighboring *Lives* that share the same cultural background.¹⁴ In addition to several Greek *Lives* that follow this pattern,¹⁵ he also cites the *Lives of Romulus* and *Numa*, the *Lives of Caesar* and *Cato*, and the *Lives of Fabius Maximus* and *Marcellus*. He also observes that Plutarch employs foils to link thematically two or more *Lives* in which they appear.¹⁶ The *Lives of Marius*, *Sulla*, and *Lucullus* provide exemplification of this technique wherein Sulla, in his better days, is contrasted, as a positive foil, with the harsh and brutal Marius. Later both Sulla and Marius are used as negative foils to Lucullus. The Socratic paradigm, in its use in the *Life of Cato the Elder* and *Life of Cato the Younger*, represents a metahistorical, intertextual variation of this biographical technique. These *Lives* are ideologically laden with significance for Romans and thus a touchy subject, one might say. Plutarch's use of the Socratic paradigm in these *Lives* is therefore as discrete as it is allusive. They are exemplars against which Plutarch will pose another exemplar who represents the true union of philosophical principles with political action. The figure of Socrates and what he represents lives on in the late Republican and Imperial periods. Plutarch is the most important Greek response to the Roman adoption of the Socratic paradigm, as represented primarily in the writings of Cicero and Seneca.

12 There are some notable exceptions to this pattern, however. See, e.g., the *Lives of Alcibiades* and *Coriolanus* and the explanations of Pelling (1986) 94 = 2002, 357 and Duff (1999) 205–6, who writes: “The *Alcibiades* is a much more complex Life than the *Coriolanus*, and it is probably for this reason that Plutarch has reversed the normal order of Lives by placing the Greek Life after the Roman Life: *Coriolanus* provides the simple model against which the rather more challenging *Life of Alcibiades* is set.” The *Aemilius/Timoleon* and *Sertorius/Eumenes* pairs are other examples. Ahlrichs (2005) has called this view into question.

13 Stadter 1988, 275–95; M. Beck 2005, 51–68.

14 H. Beck 2002, 467–89. Others have noted Plutarch's use of foils. Cf., e.g., Pelling 1988, 270 = 2002, 293 (Lysander, Callicratidas, Callibius, Gylippus, and Pausanias) and Duff 1999, 170–82 (Lysander and Callicratidas).

15 He cites the *Lives of Alcibiades* and *Nicias*. He also cites (468 n. 7) Judith Mossman's (1992) chapter on the correspondences in the *Lives of Alexander* and *Pyrrhus*. Bradley Buszard (2008, 185–215) has recently studied the intertextual resonance between the *Alexander-Caesar* and *Pyrrhus-Marius* pairs as it relates to the topic of the interrelationship of *paideia* and ambition.

16 H. Beck 2002, 468–70.

3 The Socratic Paradigm in the *Phocion-Cato the Younger* Pair

Most recent research on the Socratic paradigm has focused on the *Phocion-Cato the Younger* pair.¹⁷ In this pair Plutarch aligns a Greek who calmly faced death in the manner of Socrates (*Phoc.* 38.5) with a Roman who did not (*Cat. Min.* 67–70). Both men were politically active and both received philosophical training that to some degree informed their actions and decision-making. They are in fact eminently comparable historical figures who remained steadfast to the end. The key difference in these *Lives* is in fact the end.

We know from *On Tranquility of the Mind* (466e, 475e) that Plutarch admired Socrates for showing us not only how to live well but also how to face death well. Phocion and Cato are both described as going around in public barefoot as Socrates customarily did (*Phoc.* 4.4; *Cat. Min.* 6.6, 44.1, 50.1),¹⁸ both received training in a philosophy that affects their political conduct (*Phoc.* 3.1 [referring to Cicero's critique of Cato who acted as though he lived in Plato's commonwealth],¹⁹ 4.1–2, 5.4–5,²⁰ 32.6–7;²¹ *Cat. Min.* 4.2, 10.1–3, 46.1), but, when the end is near, only Phocion faces death calmly in the manner modeled by Socrates (*Phoc.* 36.1).²² In contrast, Cato's final moments leading up to his messy suicide are fraught with emotional outbursts and odd behavior (*Cat. Min.* 67–70).²³ Nevertheless, we must remember that Plutarch calls Cato on three separate occasions a *philosophos* (*Cat. Mai.* 27.7; *Brut.* 2.1; *Pomp.* 40.2) and this is a designation he rarely applies to his Roman heroes.²⁴ We may conclude from this that we are witnessing here the use of the Socratic paradigm not to reveal a fraud but to emphasize how Cato falls short of the model to which he undoubtedly aspired. We are also likely witnessing the calling into question of the Roman *synkrisis* of Cato with Socrates. This comparison was first forcefully drawn by Cicero in the *Tusculan Disputations* (1.71–75). This interpretation was initially proposed by Michael Trapp, who infers that Plutarch subtly voices his criticism of “earlier (Roman) writing about Cato,” such as Cicero's *Tusculan*

17 Alcalde Martin 1999; Geiger 1999; Trapp 1999; Zadorojnyi 2007.

18 Cf. Pl. *Phdr.* 229a and *Symp.* 220b supported by Ar. *Nub.* 103 and 363.

19 Cic. *Att.* 2.1.8.

20 Cf. Pl. *Prt.* 342a–343d.

21 Cf. Pl. *Grg.* 469c; 474bff.; *Cri.* 49b; *Resp.* 335d; *Ap.* 30c–d; 41d.

22 Cato appears to possess this quality too in better times (*Cat. Min.* 65.10).

23 For a full discussion of this passage, see Beck 2014, 470–3.

24 The other notable Roman who receives this appellation is M. Terentius Varro (*Rom.* 12.3). Cf. Swain 1990a, 195, and 1990b/1995, 244 n. 69. Cato's daughter Porcia also receives this appellation in the *Life of Brutus* (13.3–4) but overzealous editorial efforts have occluded this fact. The adoption of Sintenis' conjecture *philostorgos* in Ziegler's Teubner edition for the manuscript reading of *philosophos* is clearly erroneous.

Disputations and the writings of Seneca, but is not sharply critical of Cato himself.²⁵

One of the more interesting aspects of this description of Cato's final moments is the report that he immersed himself in reading and rereading the *Phaedo*. On four separate occasions we are informed that that Cato is either reading or returning to his reading of this dialogue (*Cat. Min.* 68.2, 68.3, 68.4, 70.2).²⁶ This detail suggestively impels an educated readership to contrast and compare Cato's agitated final moments with Socrates' calm bearing portrayed in the dialogue.²⁷ The placement in the narrative of the reading of this dialogue with the description of Cato's death highlights the contrast Plutarch appears intent on making. Cato's mode of death has been aptly described as "this botched up, grotesquely brutal hara-kiri" (Zadorojnyi 2007, 219) and includes the striking of a slave who is attempting to assist his master (*Cat. Min.* 70). Plutarch's account alone gives us these details (i.e., the striking of the slave and the repeated references to Cato's resumption of reading the dialogue until he has read it through twice) that our other sources of this event lack.²⁸

If we now return to Cicero, we read, in a particularly telling passage, a comparison of Cato's and Socrates' deaths that contains a paraphrase of Plato's *Phaedo* (67d and 80e: *Tusc.* 1.71–75). As Robert Goar notes, Cicero "established Cato as the Roman model of the Stoic sage—a fact of great importance for later adherents of Stoicism" (1987, 15). Seneca's frequent juxtaposing of the deaths of Cato with Socrates attests to this.²⁹ In short, Plutarch's depiction of the Younger Cato in the *Life* and his use of the Socratic paradigm to set off key aspects of his behavior runs counter to the Roman model of the Stoic sage and undermines it. Plutarch was unimpressed by Stoicism for the most part.³⁰

25 Trapp 1999, 496 (in the end, Trapp does not subscribe to this view). See also Geiger 1999, 357–64, on the subsequent tradition of the Cato/Socrates coupling.

26 Cf. Ebert (Commentary) 2004, 7: "Das Bild des philosophischen Todes, das Platon seinen Lesern im Phaidon vorstellt, hat diesen Dialog über die Jahrhunderte zu dem klassischen Beispiel einer *consolatio philosophiae* werden lassen."

27 The *exemplum Socratis* includes inter alia the restraint of anger. Cf., e.g., Sen. *De ira* 3.13.3 and Plut. *De coh. ira* 455b. Socrates' calm and jovial bearing is frequently alluded to in the *Phaedo*. See Plut. *De tranq. anim.* 466e, 475e for Plutarch's own very positive assessment of Socrates' calm bearing in the face of death. See Pelling 2005b, 110–11.

28 App. *B. Civ.* 2.99; Cass. Dio 43.11.4–5; Flor. 2.13.71–2; Livy *Per.* 114; [Caes.], *BAfr.* 88.3–4. On the provenance of this account, see Geiger 1979, 48–72.

29 See Sen. *Ep.* 67.7; 71.17; 98.12; 104.28f.; *Prov.* 3.4; 3.12ff.; *Tranq.* 16.1; *Marc.* 22.3 (collected by Geiger 1979, 64 n. 61).

30 See in general the studies of Babut 1969 and Hershbell 1992, as well as both Swain's (1990a, 192–203) and Duff's (1999, 155–8) interpretation of the role of Stoicism in the *Life of Cato the Younger*.

One problematic issue for him was the claim laid by the Stoics on the figure of Socrates.³¹ As A.A. Long indicates, "From Zeno to Epictetus, that is to say throughout the history of the Stoa, Socrates is the philosopher with whom the Stoics most closely aligned themselves" (1988, 160). Plutarch's rejection of this alignment in the *Life of the Younger Cato* serves the dual purpose of casting doubt upon the validity of the Cato Minor/Socrates comparison and calling into question the Stoic notion that seeks to lay claim to Socrates as their exemplar.

In an important article, Alexey Zadorojnyi has recently offered a slightly different interpretation based not only on Plutarch's "fundamental opposition to Stoicism" but also on his Platonist position with its "informed reservations about written discourse" (2007, 222). I am reluctant to follow Zadorojnyi in tying the reading and rereading of the *Phaedo* to a Platonic antipathy towards written discourse. This does not appear to receive confirmation in the *Life of Cato*, like Socrates, not only read books but also engaged in oral discussions on philosophical topics. We are, for example, informed in the *Life* that much of Cato's philosophic training occurred orally during late-night symposia à la Socrates (*Cat. Min.* 6.2–4, 67.1–2).³² He associates with Stoic philosophers such as Antipater of Tyre (from whom he received training in ethics and political philosophy), Athenodorus, and Apollonides, and the Peripatetic philosopher Demetrius (*Cat. Min.* 4.1–2, 10.1–3, 65.11, 67.3). The oral component to his training therefore appears to be unquestioned in the *Life*. In addition, Plutarch's alleged opposition to written discourse is not borne out in his philosophical works. In his *How to Recognize that One is Making Progress in Virtue*, for example, he clearly views both reading and listening to philosophic discourse as important to the education of an aspiring philosopher (*De prof. virt.* 79C). Citing Simonides, in this passage, Plutarch applies to this method of exposing oneself to the works of different authors the descriptive metaphor of the bee that flits from flower to flower gathering honey, while the rest of the world is preoccupied by the color and fragrance of the blossoms. In the same way, he continues, one should derive something "appropriate and useful" from reading "Plato and Xenophon," and not just "the purity of the Attic style" (*De prof. virt.* 79d).³³

31 See, e.g., Döring 1979 and Long 1988 and 2002, and Striker 1994. Socrates was rejected by the Epicureans, however. On this topic in particular, see Kleve 1983, 227–53.

32 On the Socratic paradigm here, see Duff 1999, 143: "Cato's love of drink, probably a detail of the hostile tradition, is transformed into a very Socratic tendency to discuss philosophy all night while drinking ...".

33 On the methodology implied in this passage, see Castelnérac 2007, 135–63.

It seems clear that Cato is doing the appropriate thing by reading the *Phaedo*, but is it too little, too late? Early in the *Life*, we are led to question Cato's pursuit of literature in a passage that stresses his excessive love of dice-throwing and overindulgence in drinking:

At suppers he would throw dice for the choice of portions ... At first, also, he would drink once after supper and then leave the table; but as time went on he would allow himself to drink very generously, so that he often tarried at his wine till early morning. His friends used to say that the cause of this was his civic and public activities; he was occupied with these all day, and so prevented from literary pursuits, wherefore he would hold intercourse with the philosophers at night and over the cups. For this reason, too, when a certain Memmius remarked in company that Cato spent his entire nights in drinking, Cicero answered him by saying: "Shouldn't you add that he also spends his entire days throwing dice?"

Cat. Min. 6.2–5, tr. PERRIN, modif.

The view that Cato did not have sufficient leisure time for the pursuit of literature receives support later in the *Life*:

He used to be the first to reach the senate and the last to leave it; and often, while the other senators were slowly assembling, he would sit and read quietly, holding his toga in front of the book.

Cat. Min. 19.1

We are left with the impression that the burdensome political duties of being a senator and a party leader were perhaps to blame for Cato's failings. If anything, Cato did not or could not devote enough time to reading and study, or so Plutarch would have us believe, not that his philosophical pursuits were exclusively literary. The reading and rereading of the *Phaedo* is thus not to be understood as expressive of Plutarch's supposed Platonist antipathy towards written discourse, but rather may be construed as indicative of the general insufficiency of Cato's philosophic training in general. The message we come away with is that he may have been better than most but he was not Socrates, the one Athenian who managed not only to balance his philosophic interests with his civic duties, but succeeded in transferring ethical principles to the political sphere.

4 The Socratic Paradigm in the *Life of the Elder Cato*

Another Roman legend that Plutarch appears to be intent on debunking is the widely celebrated life of the Elder Cato, who enjoyed unquestioned eminence as a role model of integrity and was identified as the model Stoic-like sage in an era that predates the acceptance of Greek philosophy by the Roman elite. In his *Life*, Cato the Elder, or the Censor (as I will call him, to avoid confusion with Cato the Younger), is paired with the *Life* of the great Athenian statesman Aristides, who enjoyed a renowned reputation for justice and incorruptibility among his peers and in posterity. The expectation is therefore created initially that the *Life* will attest to the Censor's famed moral example that so signally epitomized the *priscae virtutes* which informed Roman achievement and ideology.³⁴ In fact the *Life* of the Censor contains much that Plutarch expressly disapproves of. The three themes that loom large are excessive frugality bordering on cruelty, cruel treatment of slaves, and anti-hellenism. Once again Plutarch appears to be countering a Roman tradition that upholds the Censor's behavior as exemplary.

The Censor's rejection of Hellenic culture was well-known and a source of admiration in Roman circles in the late Republic. In general, Plutarch constructs a portrait of an avowed anti-Hellenic politician who nevertheless secretly read, studied, and derived profit from the Greek classics. Earlier in the *Life* we are presented with a slightly different image of an intellectual not at all averse to the benefits of Greek literature and culture. As a young man performing his military service under Fabius Maximus he listens to the Pythagorean philosopher Nearchus present ideas about the soul and the body "that Plato also deploys" (*Cat. Mai.* 2.3–4). This leads into a discussion of Cato's learning Greek late in life and his reading of Thucydides and Demosthenes, both of whom, we are told, influenced his rhetorical ability (*Cat. Mai.* 2.4; cf. also 4.1). Plutarch also informs us in the same breath that Cato's "writings are moderately embellished with Greek sentiments and stories, and many literal translations from the Greek have found a place among his maxims and proverbs" (*Cat. Mai.* 2.4; cf. 8.2–3).

Plutarch likens Cato's oratorical style ("graceful, powerful, pleasant, and compelling, facetious and severe, sententious and belligerent") to Plato's description of Socrates' speaking ability in the *Symposium* (*Cat. Mai.* 7.1). This

34 For good insights into Roman ideology, see Harris 1979; Gehrke 1994, 593–622; Hölkeskamp 1996, 301–38; Raaflaub 1996, 273–314; Wallace-Hadrill 1997, 3–22; and Habinek 1998. On the Elder Cato as a moral example in Plutarch, see Pérez Jiménez 2002, 109–11. Cf., e.g., Livy's (39.40.3–12) glowing assessment of Cato.

comparison might have prompted us to think of Cato as a Roman Socrates at this point in the *Life*, except that Plutarch has made a point of taking the Censor to task for his cruel treatment of slaves as beasts of burden in an earlier chapter, by employing, in stark contrast, an example from fifth-century Athens of the humane treatment of animals (*Cat. Mai.* 5).³⁵ The critique of the Censor's maltreatment of slaves is resumed in Chapter 21. This section of the *Life* includes a report that he was prone to flog slaves who were remiss in fulfilling their preparation or serving duties of meals served at *symposia* held in the Censor's house (*Cat. Mai.* 21.3–4). Thomas Wiedemann, in citing this passage, notes: "Even in antiquity, Cato was seen as an example of a cruel master, and his attitude towards his slaves was considered inhumane."³⁶ This type of behavior towards slaves is explicitly rejected by Plutarch (*De coh. ira* 459B–460C; 461A–462A; 463B) and Seneca (*De ira* 2.25.4; 3.1.4; 3.24.2; 3.35.1–3; 3.39.2–4) in their treatises on restraining rage.³⁷

In a central passage in the *Life* Plutarch delves into the Censor's attempt "to discredit Greek civilization and culture as a whole" by relaying his criticism of Socrates:

After all, even Socrates was, according to him [sc. Cato], a chatterbox and coercive, whose intention it was to lord it over his homeland by using whatever means he could, namely by undermining traditional values and by compelling his fellow citizens to modify their views so that they were no longer in conformity with the laws.

Cat. Mai. 23.1

This criticism implies that the Censor had read Plato's *Apology* and the charges against Socrates leveled therein. This would seem to indicate an acceptance of the contents of the indictment brought against Socrates by Meletus and Anytus, and a rejection of Socrates' vindication by Plato and Xenophon. It may also indicate a very superficial acquaintance with the central works of Greek philosophy in general. The barrage of anti-Hellenic sentiment voiced by the Censor in Plutarch's account goes on for two full chapters (22–23) and forcefully represents the Censor's aversion to Greek culture and training. The criticisms of Socrates and Greek philosophy in general in this passage clearly alienates the Censor from the Socratic paradigm. The placement of this

35 On this passage, see Beck 2000 and 2009.

36 Wiedemann 1988, 182, in his Chapter 9: "The Treatment of Slaves: Cruelty, Exploitation and Protection."

37 Harris 2001, 317–36, provides an excellent survey.

highly critical view of the Censor's sweeping anti-Hellenism with his harsh treatment of slaves in Chapter 21 is calculated and effective. The abuse of slaves would be unthinkable for Socrates, who also preferred edifying topics of conversation at the dinner table and whose laudable behavior was famously extolled by Alcibiades in Plato's *Symposium*, a work that Plutarch has alluded to earlier in the *Life* in his comparison of the Censor's and Socrates' oratorical gifts.

5 Conclusion

Plutarch effectively evokes comparisons with Socrates in the *Lives* of Phocion, Cato the Younger, and Cato the Elder to affirm (in the case of Phocion) or undermine (in the case of the lives of the Cato the Younger and the Censor) the validity of the Socratic paradigm in these lives that possess heavy moral and philosophical overtones. Plutarch proceeds allusively with intertextual references to Socrates that are then juxtaposed with scenes that call into question the comparison that others, in particular Cicero, have made but Plutarch rejects. This use of the Socratic paradigm in these *Lives* represents a special intertextual and metahistorical application of the internal *synkrisis*. In a subtle way, Plutarch shows us an ideal that the most exemplary Roman statesmen failed to fully live up to. This is, from a political perspective, the most important use of the Socratic paradigm in Imperial Greek literature.

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Socratic Methods in Damascius

Damian Caluori

Damascius (c. 460–after 537 CE) was the head of the pagan Platonist school at Athens when it was closed in the wake of an anti-pagan edict issued by the Christian Roman Emperor Justinian in 529 CE.¹ This event marked the end of a long tradition of philosophical activity in Athens that had begun with Socrates about a thousand years earlier. If we compare the beginning and the final phase of this tradition, we easily spot crucial differences. One consists in the fact that late ancient Platonists generally practiced philosophy in the form of commentaries, mostly on Plato and Aristotle.² But even when they wrote treatises, the conceptual scheme within which they worked was grounded in interpretations of the works of these two classic philosophers. Given that interpretation had become the main way of practicing philosophy and that the texts interpreted constituted something like a dogmatic framework,³ we would expect late ancient Platonists⁴ to have little interest in Socrates, the paradigmatically undogmatic philosopher, and we may wonder whether they have anything of interest to say about him.⁵ Accordingly, there has not been much interest in exploring the reception of Socrates in late ancient Platonism until very recently.⁶ But even in recent studies of this topic, Damascius has only received attention as part of the larger Platonist crowd.

1 I am grateful to Christopher Moore, Davide Del Forno, and Regina Fuchslin for their helpful comments on earlier drafts.

2 For the Platonist reception of Aristotle, see Karamanolis 2006.

3 I use the term “dogmatic” here with some hesitation. I am trying to indicate that Platonist philosophers in late antiquity generally took as established the truth of what Plato and, qualifiedly, Aristotle had written. Accordingly, they considered understanding them correctly to be the major task of philosophy. For more on the question of dogmatism, see Boys-Stones 2001, 99–122.

4 I use the term “Platonist” in this chapter to refer only to the Platonists at the schools of Athens and Alexandria. Including Plotinus would have required further qualifications without contributing to the points I am trying to make in this paper.

5 For this view, see Hathaway 1969; Bröcker 1966 has sometimes been credited with (or blamed for) the same view but his *Platonism without Socrates* discusses only Plotinus and says nothing at all about later Platonists.

6 For recent scholarship on this question, see Layne and Tarrant 2014.

In this chapter, I am going to argue that Damascius differs from his Platonist predecessors in his relation to Socrates. Now it is true that Damascius, like Proclus and Hermias before him, attributes three arts or methods to Socrates: erotic, dialectic, and maieutic. All three methods, as used by Socrates, share the feature of having a pragmatic or personal dimension. By this I mean roughly that the exercise of these methods aims at revealing something about, or changing something in, the interlocutor's mind.⁷ While attributing these methods to Socrates was common enough among Platonists, I will argue that Damascius' own use of dialectic and maieutic was new. Damascius reveals *aporiai* in the minds of his readers, just as Socrates did in the minds of his interlocutors. By using *elenchus* and maieutic, Damascius puts his readers into the shoes of Socrates' interlocutors. However, I will also attempt to show how the goal of the Socratic methods in Damascius is not Socratic in that Damascius aims to reveal to us certain epistemic limitations that we have as human beings. I shall further try to explain why Damascius, while *using* dialectic and maieutic, only *describes* the erotic art. We will see that the reason has to do with Damascius' postulating a distinction in the rational soul between desiderative and cognitive attitudes that we do not find in his fellow Platonists.

1 Socrates

Damascius usually refers to the character Socrates in Plato's dialogues, even though there are also a handful of references to Xenophon's Socrates. There is evidence in Damascius' work neither for an awareness of the Socratic problem⁸ nor for a distinction between so-called Socratic and other Platonic dialogues. This, however, does not rule out the possibility that Damascius interprets Plato's dialogues in such a way that the character Socrates has a particular role to play. Indeed, according to Damascius and other Platonists, Socrates' role crucially consists in the display of the mastery of the three methods or arts mentioned above.

Damascius writes in his commentary on Plato's *Philebus*: "What qualities do the characters represent? Socrates stands for that which is capable of knowledge and thought, Protarchus for that which is capable of having opinion, and Philebus for that which is animalistic." Proclus, Damascius' predecessor at the Athenian school, maintains that Socrates in the *Alcibiades* stands for

7 For example, when using *elenchus*, Socrates aims at revealing that his interlocutor is committed to a set of inconsistent beliefs.

8 For the Socratic problem, see now Dorion 2011.

“the intellect of the soul” (Procl. *In Alc.* 43.8–11). Similarly, Olympiodorus, a sixth-century Platonist from Alexandria, explains in his commentary on the *Gorgias* that “Socrates stands for the intellectual and knowing [type]” (*In Gorg.* prooem. 8).⁹ Although there are differences between how these three interpreters understood Plato’s Socrates, they are not of great significance for our purposes. They agree that Socrates stands for rationality and knowledge, representing the best part in us (or the best type of human being).

If Socrates stands for knowledge, we have to ask what kind of knowledge this is. It is easily assumed that Platonists, given their predilections and given the passages quoted above, saw him as standing for theoretical knowledge.¹⁰ But if we look at what Proclus, for example, says about this topic, we find this: “Of the three species of knowledge that Socrates clearly testifies himself as having, namely dialectic, maieutic, and erotic, you will find the species of dialectic revealed in this dialogue through the action in it and grasp the peculiarity of maieutic displayed everywhere in Socrates’ arguments, but, above all, the works of erotic prevail throughout the whole composition” (Procl. *In Alc.* 27.16–23). Hermias, teacher at Alexandria and like Proclus student of Syrianus, explains in his commentary on the *Phaedrus*: “Socrates conceded to master three arts: the erotic art, as he says in the *Symposium* about Diotima: ‘She has taught me erotic’ [*Symp.* 201b5]; the maieutic art as in the *Theaetetus*: ‘God has commanded that I act as a midwife’ [*Tht.* 150c7]; dialectic in the *Cratylus*: ‘For I know,’ he says, ‘nothing but giving and taking arguments.’¹¹ He is useful to the youth through these three kinds of knowledge” (Herm. *In Phdr.* 21.10–15). All three species of knowledge attributed to Socrates are thus arts. Hence, they are practical rather than theoretical.¹² Moreover, they are useful in education (“useful to the youth,” as Hermias puts it): Socrates possesses the arts or methods to guide the youth to the truth.

The fact that Socrates possesses practical knowledge is of course compatible with his possessing theoretical knowledge. Indeed, when discussing dialectic, we will see that the Platonists attributed to Socrates theoretical knowledge as well. Nevertheless, the above quotations indicate that the Platonists primarily

9 For Proclus and Olympiodorus on the *Alcibiades*, see Renaud and Tarrant 2015.

10 For the Platonist attribution of theoretical knowledge to Socrates, see Griffin 2014, 103: “Socrates symbolizes the soul in its best condition, realizing its potential to grasp and understand the truth.”

11 Perhaps Hermias had *Cratylus* 390c10–11 in mind. Bernard 1997, 103 n. 101, suspects that Hermias misremembered and thought of *Theaetetus* 161b4–5. I suggest *Statesman* 286a4–5.

12 “Practical knowledge” in this chapter refers to both what Aristotle calls practical and what he calls productive knowledge. For reasons I cannot go into here, I believe that this distinction does not matter from a Platonist point of view.

saw him as a practitioner of three arts or methods and thus as a character standing primarily for practical knowledge. This is certainly the case with Damascius, to whose description and use of these Socratic methods I shall now turn.

2 Erotic

The subject matter of erotic is, of course, *erôs*, and Damascius is particularly interested in the relation between *erôs* and desire (*In Phlb.* 14–16). The scope of desire in Damascius does not encompass everything that we might classify as desire; in particular, corporeal desires, such as that for food, are excluded. Instead, Damascius refers by “desire” only to desires that we as rational beings have. This restriction may seem surprising because it implies that *erôs*, being considered a desire in the restricted sense, is a rational desire and thus can hardly be the same as sexual desire (as we moderns standardly understand the latter). However, in the present context we should think about erotic desire against the background of Plato’s *Symposium*, where Diotima urges Socrates to transcend the understanding of *erôs* as sexual desire for a particular body, roughly on the grounds that true beauty (and thus the true object of erotic desire) is incorporeal. Having in mind this background, Damascius’ view that *erôs* is a rational desire is perhaps less surprising.

Damascius asks whether all (rational) desires, under specific circumstances or descriptions, can be erotic or whether erotic desires are a specific kind of desire, essentially distinct from other kinds. While he himself defends the latter option, Proclus opts for the former (Procl. *In Alc.* 329.23–5). According to Proclus, *erôs* is characterized as an intense desire and thus is a mode of desire or a modified desire. Hence, it is not a specific kind of desire, which implies that any rational desire allowing for this modification can be erotic, if it possesses a sufficient degree of intensity. Against Proclus, Damascius claims that *erôs* is a specific kind of desire. For, he argues, desires are at least partly defined by their objects, and different desires have different objects. Since erotic desire has its specific object that is distinct from the objects of other desires, there are desires that are not erotic, quite independently of how intense they are.

Damascius distinguishes three kinds of desire. First, there is the desire for friendship (or, more broadly, *philia*).¹³ Desiring friendship consists in desiring a

13 *Philia* encompasses more than friendship; it includes family bonds and political associations as well. See, for example, Joachim 1951, 244; Cooper 1999, 312–4; Benetatos 2013.

union with other people that is based on equality. The second kind of desire is that for justice. He names this desire *agapêsis*, a word related to *agapê*. *Erôs*, Damascius states, is the desire that, in virtue of a lack, aims passionately at completion.¹⁴ But he also calls the object of erotic desire beauty (*In Phlb.* 16.27–30). This is puzzling. Why is passionately aiming at completion the same as passionately aiming at beauty? The solution to this problem must be that the completion of erotic desire consists in the acquisition of a beautiful object. But this is still rather unclear. A fragment of the *Vita Isidori*, the biography Damascius wrote about his teacher Isidorus, will help: “Everyone agrees that the inquiry into being, which the lover of sight undertakes, comprises three primary and very great elements: *erôs*, industry, and acumen.¹⁵ The first and greatest is *erôs*, the most awesome hunter (*deinotatos ichneutês*) of everything beautiful and good” (*Vit. Isid.* 33A Ath.). In this fragment, we find a reference to the *Republic* and one to the *Symposium*. At *Republic* 475e4, Socrates describes true philosophers as those whose love of sight is for the truth. Note that, what will become important in a moment, the true lovers of sight are also, in the same passage, described as those who approach and see beauty itself (*Resp.* 476b10–11). Thus, according to Damascius, the lover of sight is the philosopher in so far as he sees the object of his inquiry as beauty or at least as something beautiful. The second reference is to the *Symposium*, where *erôs* is said to have inherited from his father’s side what makes him “a schemer after the beautiful and good ... and an awesome hunter (*thêreutês deinós*), passionately desiring wisdom, ... philosophizing throughout his life ...” (*Symp.* 203d5–7). Diotima, who explains the nature of *erôs* to Socrates in this passage, then states that no god philosophizes, because the gods already possess wisdom, nor do the ignorant, because they do not realize what they lack. Thus, in the *Symposium*, *erôs* is described as something that lacks what it seeks and that passionately pursues the object of his desire, which is beauty.¹⁶ The allusions to the passages from the *Republic* and the *Symposium* in the above citation make clear what the object of *erôs* is: it is wisdom and truth seen as beautiful.¹⁷ This solves our

14 Interestingly, thus, the three kinds of desire Damascius attributes to us as rational beings are related to the three notions of love that are still of great interest in contemporary philosophy: *philia*, *erôs*, and *agapê*. See, for example, Soble 1989, a reader on the philosophy of love, titled: *Eros, Agape, and Philia: Readings in the Philosophy of Love*.

15 For acumen, see Arist. *An. post.* 89b10 and *Eth. Nic.* 1142b5.

16 At least since Ficino, scholars have pointed out that Diotima describes *erôs* in words that in the same work also describe Socrates, the paradigmatic philosopher. See, e.g., Ficino (1956 [1484]) *or.* 7.2; Bury 1932, lx–lxi; Robin 1964, 161–4; Osborne 1994, 94.

17 He expounds the same view in his commentary on the *Phaedo*. With reference to *Phaedrus* 246d8–e1, he compares the different ways of ascent depicted in the *Phaedrus* and the *Phaedo*: “Why did Plato add beauty when he said ‘the divine, beautiful, wise, and

problem. For, as I stated above, *erôs* is a desire of the rational soul. For the rational soul's erotic desire, completion consists precisely in the possession of wisdom and truth, the objects towards which reason is naturally directed. Since the beauty that the rational soul seeks is wisdom and truth, achieving completion is the acquisition of this kind of beautiful object.

Why does Damascius introduce beauty at all, instead of just claiming that *erôs* aims at wisdom and truth? One reason is, of course, that his discussion must be consistent with his interpretation of Plato's dialogues. But I think that there is also another reason: I claimed above that the object of *erôs* is wisdom and truth *seen as beautiful*. The qualification "seen as beautiful" is crucial because it shows that the object we aim at, wisdom, presents itself to us in an attractive way and gives rise in us to a desire to understand. Beauty speaks, not to our *cognitive*, but to our *desiderative* attitudes. Accordingly, the function of erotic consists in guiding the learner's *erôs* to see the object of inquiry as beautiful, as attractive and worthy of pursuit; it makes the learner receptive of, and allows her to develop a passion for, *true* beauty, as opposed to other things that appear beautiful. Damascius' emphasis on the role of beauty follows from his psychological view that cognition and desire are two *distinct* psychic faculties or activities (*In Phlb.* 14.1–2). Being distinct, they have to be addressed separately. Accordingly, the art of erotic is an invaluable educational tool whose role is quite distinct from teaching students how to understand views or claims, how to interpret texts, how to construct arguments, and how to defend or attack philosophical positions.

Readers of Platonic dialogues can see how Socrates kindles a yearning for wisdom and a passion for truth in many of his interlocutors, in particular among bright teenagers,¹⁸ even though he is not always successful.¹⁹ Many readers will also experience this sort of passion themselves when reading Plato. It seems that the dialogue form plays a crucial role in this. For it allows Plato to address our desiderative attitudes in ways a technical philosophical treatise or a commentary on a philosophical work can hardly do. This is the reason, I suggest, why Damascius, in his commentaries and in his technical treatise *On First Principles*, to which I shall shortly turn, only *describes* this method

good"? Because [the *Phaedrus*] is an erotic dialogue; for there, the ascent to the good is by means of beauty, here [i.e., in the *Phaedo*] by means of wisdom" (*In Phd.* v.1.41).

18 But not only in young interlocutors; see, e.g., how Polemarchus sides with Socrates at *Resp.* 1.335e (see also *Phdr.* 257b).

19 Sophists, some of them intelligent and highly educated, are often unimpressed. Perhaps this shows that a certain sensibility for this sort of inquiry must be presupposed for it to work.

without actually *applying* it with regard to the reader. A technical treatise is simply not suitable to this end.

The situation is different with the other two Socratic methods, dialectic and maieutic: Damascius not only describes, but also uses them. This is made possible by the fact that both address, not our desiderative, but our cognitive attitudes. Before discussing them, however, I wish to briefly consider dialectical practices as understood by the Platonists in late antiquity quite generally. This will give us the background for understanding Damascius' dialectical innovations.

3 Dialectical Practice

The Platonist understanding of dialectic is based on Plato, and the best source for a discussion of Platonist dialectical practice is Proclus.²⁰ While Aristotle considered dialectic the practice of arguing on the basis of reputable opinions (*Soph. el.* 165b3–4) and the Stoics called “dialectic” the part of logic concerned with signifiers and what is signified,²¹ Plato, at least in dialogues considered late, called “dialectic” a method of collecting items into genera, of dividing them properly into species, and thus of organizing genera and species correctly. Whether the subject matter of dialectic is Platonic forms or is by contrast topic-neutral is a matter of scholarly debate.²²

For Platonists in late antiquity, however, there is no doubt that its subject matter is the world of Platonic forms. Already Plotinus' brief treatise *On Dialectic* (*Enn.* 1.3) focuses on this topic. The treatise begins thus: “What art or method or practical activity (*epitêdeusis*) is there that guides us upwards to where we must go?” Plotinus identifies this art or method as dialectic; the place “where we must go” is the world of Platonic forms. Plotinus thus describes dialectic as an art or method used in the ascent to the world of forms. The second part of Plato's *Parmenides* can be interpreted as an example of dialectic in this

20 It should be noted that Proclus' discussion, while revealing how Platonists thought about dialectical practice, does not show that Platonists practiced dialectic in these ways. Platonism at the time took place for the most part in a school setting, and the way Platonist teachers educated their students and guided their ascent to the truth was primarily by lectures on Plato and Aristotle. I say “primarily” as they also used other educational tools. Proclus, for example, wrote a treatise, *Elements of Theology*, which is a systematic exposition of Platonist metaphysics. However, these other tools are much less significant than, and usually themselves based on, the interpretation of canonical texts.

21 DL 7.41–9 and 62; Sen. *Ep.* 89.17; Hülser 1987, lxxviii; Barnes 1999, 65–7.

22 Frede 1997, 130–46.

sense.²³ At 135d Parmenides tells Socrates that, while the impulse²⁴ driving him towards philosophy is fine and divine, he is young enough still to need training. Although Parmenides does not say so explicitly, it seems clear that what he believes young Socrates lacks is *dialectical* training. The second part of the *Parmenides* is a demonstration of the kind of training that Socrates needs.

Proclus distinguishes three practices (*meletai*) of dialectic.²⁵ These practices are distinguished from one another by their field of application. First, dialectic is used to awaken reason in young people and to train their “eye of the soul” (Procl. *In Parm.* 653.11). Dialectic in this use aims at awakening young people’s reason and at provoking them to engage in inquiry. Proclus sees this use at work in the exercise in the *Parmenides* discussed above. Quite generally, he considers this dialectical practice the only one that is an *exercise* or *training* (*gumnastikê*). Part of the training consists in being confronted with contradictions so that the young people can work out their way to the truth.²⁶

The second practice of dialectic is for those who “practice philosophy in its purity” (Procl. *In Parm.* 653.33–4 with reference to Pl. *Sph.* 253e5). This is the primary and core use of dialectic: it consists in studying the forms in their interrelations, in “unfolding the whole intelligible world, traversing from form to form until it [the soul] reaches the first form, sometimes using analysis, sometimes definition, now demonstrating, now dividing, both moving downwards from above and upwards from below until, having examined in every way the whole nature of the intelligible, it climbs aloft to that which is beyond all being” (Procl. *In Parm.* 653.21–8). Dialectic in this application aims at revealing the truth (*emphainein to alêthes*) and accordingly is also said to induce recollection of reality (*tôn ontôn anamnêstikon*) (*In Parm.* 989.18–20). The first purpose is an understanding of the forms in their precise ontic relations. The second is an ascent to the principle of the realm of forms, to the “first form,” as Proclus states.²⁷

The third dialectical practice is refutation. Proclus considers it, with reference to Plato’s *Sophist* 230d6–8, a sort of purification (*In Parm.* 989.14). This dialectical practice is useful, according to Proclus, in discussions with sophists and other people who are subject to what he calls double-ignorance. By this he means not knowing that one does not know (as opposed to simple

23 See Procl. *In Parm.* 648–58.

24 His *erôs*, we might say.

25 For dialectic in Proclus, see Del Forno 2014.

26 Examples of this practice of dialectic, according to Proclus, are to be found in the *Lysis* and the *Theaetetus*.

27 Proclus mentions the *Phaedrus* and the *Sophist* as dialogues exemplary for the second use of dialectic.

ignorance, recognized as such and addressed when using the first dialectical practice).²⁸

The second dialectical practice is the only one that is immediately concerned with truth; mastering it allows for the training of the young and the refutation of sophists.²⁹ The other two are dealing with two distinct kinds of ignorance: the ignorance of the inexperienced but willing and talented young philosophers and the ignorance of people “obsessed by their conceit of wisdom” (*In Parm.* 654.7–8). In the next two sections I am going to argue that Damascius goes beyond the school tradition in actually applying dialectic in his own work, putting the reader into a dialectical situation similar to that into which Socrates puts his interlocutors in Plato’s dialogues. I will discuss Damascius’ use of *aporiai* and self-refutation to this end.

4 *Aporiai*

Aporiai are puzzles or puzzlements that play a crucial role not only in the so-called Socratic dialogues but also in other Platonic works and in Aristotle. In what follows, it will be important to keep two uses of the term “*aporia*” apart, namely that of puzzle and that of puzzlement.³⁰ To explain *aporia* as puzzlement, Aristotle writes in *Metaphysics* B: “To those who wish to make progress, it is useful to go through *aporiai* properly; for the later progress is the solution of what one earlier puzzled about; it is impossible to untie the knot if one is unaware [of it]. But the *aporia* in our thought reveals this in the object. For insofar as one is in a state of *aporia*, one resembles those who are tied; for it is impossible to move forward either way” (*Metaph.* B 995a27–33).³¹ According to this passage, I am in a state of *aporia*, of puzzlement, if I am confronted with a problem such that I cannot currently make progress. What causes this state of *aporia*? The answer is sketched in the *Topics*: “Equality of contrary reasoning (*logismoi*) would seem to be the cause of *aporia*. For when we reason on both sides and it appears to us that everything can come about in accordance with either, we are in *aporia* as to which of the two to take up”

28 Proclus points to Socrates’ discussions in the *Gorgias*, in the *Protagoras*, and the first book of the *Republic* as examples of this dialectical practice.

29 This is evidence for the correctness of the view that Platonists attribute theoretical knowledge to Socrates; practical knowledge of the kind in question here presupposes theoretical knowledge.

30 For the two uses of the term “*aporia*” discussed in what follows, see Matthews 1999, 29–30; Politis 2006, 90.

31 Politis 2003 helpfully discusses this passage.

(*Top.* 145b16–20). I am in a state of *aporia* if it appears to me that I have equally good reasons on both sides of a question of the form “p or not p?” Because an *aporia* here is a mental state, we may call this sense of “*aporia*” subjective. The second way of understanding *aporia* may be called “objective”: there is an impasse or a puzzle (in a specific context), a knot, because there are equally good reasons on either of two opposing sides—to affirm some proposition p and to deny it. These knots have to be untied if one wants to make progress towards an understanding of reality.

Traditionally, Socratic *aporai* have been considered puzzlements while Aristotelian *aporai* have been considered puzzles.³² While it is true, as the above quotations show, that Aristotle discusses *aporai* in the subjective sense, his real interest is in the puzzles and their function in contexts of inquiry, rather than in the perplexities they cause in the inquirer. For Socrates, however, the perplexities are crucial, whether or not puzzles also have a function in the context of inquiry. For they aim at bringing about a change in the interlocutor’s mind, a change of deeply held (if confused) views that so far have had an important function in the interlocutor’s life. Damascian *aporai* are Socratic, as we shall see, because they share with Socratic *aporai* this personal aspect.

When speaking of *aporai* in Damascius, I refer to a type of *aporia* that he uses in his major work *De Principiis* (*On Principles*). Unlike his other philosophical works, it is not a commentary but a treatise concerned with Platonist metaphysics. As is well known, late ancient Platonist metaphysics presents a layered ontology that is largely based on interpretations of Plato’s dialogues, most importantly of the *Parmenides*. *De Principiis* is not, however, a treatise explaining and defending the principles that constitute this layered ontology. Instead, the work is to a large extent structured by means of long series of *aporai*.³³ Damascius considers each layer of the then common Platonist ontology and raises *aporai* concerning it. Many crucial *aporai* are not solved; Damascius considers their occurrence as unavoidable when we attempt to understand the metaphysical structure of reality. This is the sort of *aporia* that I am interested in here.

Let us discuss its first *aporia* as an example. I will discuss it only in terms of method, ignoring the arguments themselves.³⁴ The first *aporia* concerns an item that Damascius calls the Ineffable, something considered beyond the grasp of reason and language.³⁵ Damascius asks whether or not this item is the

32 See Matthews 1999, 29–30. This view has been challenged by Politis 2006.

33 See Galpérine 1987, 23–8.

34 I have discussed the arguments in some detail in Caluori 2018.

35 For more on the Ineffable in the history of ancient Platonism, see O’Meara 2013.

ultimate principle of everything and gives us (in his view compelling) reasons to believe that it is and (in his view equally compelling) reasons that it is not. In other words: he presents us with an *aporia* in the technical sense. This *aporia* crucially functions both objectively and subjectively. Objectively, it is a real puzzle whether the Ineffable is the ultimate principle of everything, and there actually are equally good reasons for both affirmative and negative answers to the question arising from the *aporia* (in Damascius' view). Now engaging with this *aporia* and thinking about the reasons given on both sides, we end up in a state of *aporia* (in the subjective sense) in that we fail to discover reasons on one side or the other that would allow us to solve the *aporia*. Thus, while engaging with this *aporia*, we end up in a state of *aporia* (in the subjective sense).

While Aristotle thought that *aporiai* provide us with (perhaps necessary) means to make progress in establishing a science of metaphysics, Damascian *aporiai* cannot be solved; the realm of reality remains beyond the grasp of reason. If so, the interest we may have in Damascian puzzles must be found somewhere else. I suggest that it lies in the puzzlements they produce in the person thinking about the puzzles. By engaging with Damascius' text, we, the readers of *De Principiis*, take on the role of those of Socrates' interlocutors who are brought into a state of *aporia* by him.

Now at least one crucial aim for Socrates consist in helping his interlocutors discover the flaws of some of their deeply held convictions, which ideally makes it possible for them to change their way of life. Another aim may be similar to that of Aristotle in that it may help the interlocutor to make progress in inquiry. Damascius' aim is certainly different from the latter, because his *aporiai* are the end-point of inquiry. It is similar to the former, however, insofar as *aporiai* help us, the readers, to become aware of our own ignorance. Yet there is still an important difference to the Socratic enterprise: Being in a state of *aporia* is beneficial for us, according to Damascius, because it allows us to learn something about ourselves as *human beings* (as opposed to learning something about ourselves as the individual human beings we are). For we become aware of the limits of reason. And since human beings are rational beings, we learn about our own cognitive limitations by learning about the limitations of reason.

5 Self-Refutation as *Elenchus*

The second feature of Damascian dialectic that I want to discuss is self-refutation. Self-refutation is a form of *elenchus*, in which the speaker

refutes himself.³⁶ The *elenchus* found in the so-called Socratic dialogues is not a self-refutation but the refutation of an interlocutor, revealing the latter's holding a set of inconsistent beliefs. However, in Plato's *Sophist* (238d–9b), we find a self-refutation that is called an *elenchus* as well. This suggests that Plato's notion of *elenchus* is broad enough to cover self-refutations as well. In what follows, I am interested in the personal dimension of Damascian self-refutation that it shares with the Socratic-Platonic *elenchus* and that is notably absent from the Aristotelian *elenchus*.³⁷ As Dorion states: "The Socratic-Platonic *elenchus* maintains a moral and personal dimension to the extent that it strives to free a person from the false beliefs that impede his progress toward knowledge and virtue (cf. *Sph.* 230b–d). Aristotle breaks with this traditional view of the *elenchus*."³⁸ While Damascius' *elenchus* does not strive to free a person from false beliefs, it nevertheless shares the personal dimension of the Socratic-Platonic *elenchus*.

I mentioned above that a self-refutation is an *elenchus* in which the speaker refutes himself. Recent work on self-refutation has provided us with a much more precise definition. Castagnoli defines operational self-refutation, the sort of self-refutation of interest here, thus: "A proposition *p* is operationally self-refuting when, although it could be true, there is no way of coherently presenting it, since the very act of asserting *p* also entails a commitment to something else which is in conflict with *p*, and thus to a contradiction."³⁹ Assume, for example, we claim: "The Ineffable is ineffable." According to Damascius, this claim is operationally self-refuting. For by stating it, we say something about the Ineffable (namely that it is ineffable) and in this way contradict the content of what we say by saying "The Ineffable is ineffable." Note the following two points: first, the contradiction does not imply that the statement is false. It only shows that we cannot state it without contradiction. Second, the *act* of assertion is essential to operational self-refutation. Thus, this sort of self-refutation necessarily has a pragmatic dimension.

This is one example of a cluster of self-refutations that occur when we attempt to cognitively grasp the Ineffable;⁴⁰ it concerns not only speech acts but also acts of thought and beliefs. If we attempt cognitively to grasp the Ineffable, Damascius claims, "the *logos* incurs reversal [*peritrepetai*], as he [Plato] says, and in truth we do not have any belief [about it]."⁴¹ "Reversal" here

36 I will provide a more detailed definition below.

37 For the Aristotelian definition of *elenchus*, see *Soph. el.* 167a23–7.

38 See Dorion 1995, 11.

39 See Castagnoli 2010, 205.

40 For the following, see Caluori 2018.

41 *Princ.* 1.16.5–6.

stands for “self-refutation” (*peritropê*), an expression that Damascius inherited from the skeptics; it is often found in Sextus Empiricus.⁴²

What Platonic passage does Damascius have in mind here and what results from a self-refutation? Westerink and Combès, the editors of *De Principiis*, point to *Phaedo* 95b6, the only place in Plato’s work where the expression of a *logos* incurring reversal occurs.⁴³ Unfortunately, this passage is unhelpful because Plato there does not use it in any technical sense. However, if we instead look at the context of the above quotation, we see that Damascius is referring to *Sophist* 238d–239b. There we find, not the term “self-refutation” (*peritropê*), but rather an actual self-refutation that Plato refers to by the term “*elenchus*.”

The function of Damascian self-refutations is the same as that of the *aporiai* of the type discussed in the previous section. They reveal to us a limit of reason.⁴⁴ In Damascius’ words, “but if we, saying about it that it is ineffable ... incur reversal through the *logos*, we must know that these words and thoughts belong to our pangs of labor, which ... report nothing about it but rather indicate our own affections and *aporiai* and our missing of the target (*ateuxiai*)” (*Princ.* 8.12–20). Hence, the point of a self-refutation concerns us, not the object with reference to which we end up in a self-refutation. Note further that, just as the *aporiai* discussed earlier, a self-refutation is possible only because it (in this case necessarily) possesses the pragmatic or personal dimension that I identified as a key feature of Socratic dialectic.

6 Maieutic

One concept referred to in the above quotation requires further scrutiny: What are the pangs of labor Damascius mentions? As readers of the *Theaetetus* know, pangs of labor occur, when one is subjected to Socratic maieutic. In the relevant passage, 148e–151d, Socrates presents himself to Theaetetus as the son of a midwife who is himself skilled in his mother’s art. The children Socrates brings fourth are the philosophical arguments and ideas of young men. As several scholars have pointed out, the famous image of the midwife is so strongly associated with Socrates that it is hard to dissociate it from the real Socrates even though it is most likely a child of Plato’s imagination.⁴⁵

42 For this observation, see Rappe 1998.

43 *Princ.* 1.16 n. 1.

44 See Hoffmann 1997.

45 For this, see Maier 1913, 359–60; Robinson 1950, 4; Burnyeat 1977, 7. This association may seem problematic for those modern interpreters who distinguish Socratic from non-Socratic dialogues, because the *Theaetetus* does not belong to the class of Socratic

In his commentary on the *Phaedo*, Damascius describes maieutic as an art of questioning “that elicits the knowledge with which someone is pregnant” (*In Phd.* v.1.301). Here he follows the Platonist tradition that understood maieutic against the background of the theory of recollection that we find in the *Meno*.⁴⁶ In this picture, maieutic is a skill to help others recollect; while the knowledge to be elicited is already there, the interlocutor lacks an awareness of his or her knowledge. One problem for identifying, or at least closely associating, recollection and maieutic concerns the pangs of labor. They do not seem to fit easily with maieutic as an art of recollection. The slave boy in the *Meno*, in any case, does not seem to suffer very much. I am now going to argue that pangs of labor play a crucial role in Damascian maieutic, thereby attempting to highlight a further original feature of Damascius’ reception of Socrates.

Theaetetus suffers from *aporiai* (151a6–7) and this suffering is his pangs of labor, brought about by the midwife Socrates. According to Damascius, we are in a state of *aporia* when attempting to grasp the Ineffable. With a view to people who, as a consequence of the *aporia* concerning the Ineffable, claim that there is no such thing as the Ineffable, Damascius states: “If someone speaks in this way, we will forgive him his puzzlement (*aporia*) ... but, starting from what is better known to us, we must excite the ineffable pangs of labor in us towards an ineffable (I do not know how to say) awareness (*sunaisthêsis*) of this sublime truth” (*Princ.* 6.11–16).

As I claimed earlier, there is no solution to the *aporiai* about the Ineffable, and there will be no birth. If so, what is the point of these pangs of labor and thus of the new application of maieutic that Damascius introduces? Doesn’t the *aporia* show that there is no such thing as the Ineffable, if all our attempts cognitively to grasp it are doomed to failure? The person to be forgiven in the above quotation thinks we should give up, and it is not easy to see why she should be wrong. Damascius’ answer to these questions must be found in his view on the relation of the pangs of labor to the “sublime truth” whose ineffable awareness he claims the pangs of labor generate. The truth he refers to, I suggest, is the truth of the existence of the Ineffable. Since this awareness is ineffable and a consequence of pangs of labor due to insoluble *aporiai*, it is clear that it cannot be the result of rational considerations. This is not sufficient, however, to dismiss it as irrational. For, I suggest, the pangs of labor, according to Damascius, generate an experience that occurs when seriously

dialogues. But it is not so for Platonists of late antiquity, who do not make such a distinction.

46 See, e.g., Procl. *In Alc.* 28–9. We still find this link between maieutic and recollection in the interpretation of Maier 1913, 360.

engaging with the *aporiai* about the Ineffable. We experience a state in which we cannot help but (non-rationally) be aware of the Ineffable. But how do we know that there are such experiences? We must experience them for ourselves. And this happens according to Damascius precisely if we engage with the *aporiai* of *De Principiis*. This may appear unsatisfactory in two ways. First, we may doubt that there are such experiences. Second, we may find this approach epistemically unsatisfactory.

As for the second point, perhaps a comparison with J.S. Mill will help. In *Utilitarianism*, Mill famously distinguishes between two kinds of pleasure, higher and lower pleasure, such that no amount of lower pleasure (such as that of food) can trump, as far as goodness is concerned, any amount of higher pleasure (such as seeing a Händel opera). How do we know that there is indeed such a distinction? Only by experience. Presumably there is no way to convince a person who has never experienced higher pleasures that there are such, other than by having this person experience them. But even if this is the case, it does not imply that Mill's account is deficient. We are aware of many things only by experience, and it is not clear why the fact that some of these experiences—such as Mill's higher pleasures—are accessible only first-personally would make them epistemically deficient (as long as these experiences are not idiosyncratic but in principle individually accessible to other people as well).

As for the first point, Damascius' account will certainly have appeared more plausible in the cultural context of late antiquity than it does to modern readers. Ultimately, it is an empirical question that we do not need to go into here. For my current concern is with maieutic as a method, and in terms of method his point seems clear: the reader experiences this state only by engaging with the *aporia* for him- or herself. Thus, maieutic too possesses the personal dimension that I identified as Socratic.

7 Conclusion

To conclude, we find in Damascius all three arts or methods that late ancient Platonists attributed to Socrates: erotic, dialectic, and maieutic. While erotic is described in his commentary on the *Philebus*, Damascius does not use or apply it anywhere in his work. This is due to the fact, I suggested, that erotic, unlike dialectic and maieutic, concerns our desiderative attitudes. As such, it is rather difficult to put to work in a commentary or in a technical treatise such as *De Principiis* because these genres do not usually stimulate our

(non-cognitive) desiderative attitudes. As we know from reading Plato, a dialogue is better suited to this end.

We have seen that Damascius uses the other two methods in his own philosophy. *De Principiis* puts the reader into a dialectical situation and induces pangs of labor in her. Damascius' use of these methods is both Socratic and original. It is Socratic because of the personal or pragmatic dimension of these methods as used by Socrates. It is original in that Damascius uses both methods in ways that we do not find in the works of his predecessors.

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PART 3

Roman Writers



Cicero and Socrates

Sean McConnell

Cicero had a great interest in Socrates' life, his character, and his philosophical and political activities. His references to Socrates are almost all to be found in his rhetorical and philosophical works,¹ and they fall into two broad categories. On the one hand, Cicero often makes reference to the character Socrates who appears in various guises in the various dialogues of Plato, Xenophon, and Aeschines.² Cicero is an astute critic: when engaging with the Socratic dialogues he routinely makes it clear to his own readers that Socrates is a literary construct, who may or may not reflect accurately the philosophical views and the characteristics of the historical Socrates.³ In this way Cicero indicates that he is not passing judgment on the historical Socrates but rather on the character in a particular dialogue. On the other hand, Cicero at times comments on Socrates without any allusion to the literary dynamics of the Socratic dialogues, in such cases indicating that he is referring in some sense to the historical figure. This category provides the best evidence for Cicero's reception of Socrates the philosopher, and it forms the focus of this chapter.

Cicero's direct mentions of Socrates take a number of forms. Many, however, tell us more about the reception of Socrates in the Hellenistic philosophical tradition than about Cicero's own distinctive attitudes. A brief survey demonstrates this nicely.

(1) Cicero calls Socrates the "father of philosophy" (*Fin.* 2.1; *Nat. D.* 1.93) and he presents him as the epitome of a virtuous and wise man (*De or.* 1.231; *Parad. Stoic.* 3.23; *Fam.* 9.22.3; *Tusc.* 1.100, 5.30). This accords with Socrates' status as the philosopher *par excellence* in the Stoic and Academic philosophical traditions,

- 1 There is only one reference to Socrates by name in a speech (*Scaur.* 4, referencing his arguments in Plato's *Phaedo*), and only four in his letters (*Att.* 4.16.3, 8.2.4, 14.9.1; *Fam.* 9.22.3).
- 2 Plato: *Scaur.* 4; *Att.* 4.16.3; *De or.* 1.28, 3.15, 3.122, 3.129; *Rep.* 2.3, 2.22, 2.51; *Leg.* 2.6; *Fin.* 2.1–2; *Nat. D.* 3.82; *Orat.* 15, 39, 41–2; *Brut.* 292; *Sen.* 78; *Div.* 1.52, 1.60; *Op. gen. orat.* 17; *Tusc.* 1.53, 1.57, 1.71, 1.97, 1.102–3, 5.34–6. Xenophon: *Brut.* 292; *Nat. D.* 1.31, 2.18, 3.27; *Sen.* 59. Aeschines: *Inv.* 1.5; *Brut.* 292.
- 3 For instance, he presents the view that Plato combined his experience of Socrates with his own Pythagorean learning, thus putting into Socrates' voice material that would not have been expressed by Socrates himself (*Rep.* 1.15–16; *Fin.* 5.87).

and in such cases Cicero appears more or less to be repeating a stereotypical view.⁴

(2) Cicero uses episodes and anecdotes involving Socrates as examples in moral philosophy. For example, he presents the story of the physiologist Zopyrus declaring Socrates base on the evidence of his features, a judgment with which Socrates agrees before arguing that reason allows him (and all of us) to overcome such conative flaws (*Fat.* 10; *Tusc.* 4.80);⁵ he cites the observation that Socrates bore the same countenance at all times, reflective of his wisdom and unflappability (*Tusc.* 3.31; *Off.* 1.90); he reports the story about Socrates' relationship with Alcibiades, who felt moved to beseech Socrates to teach him virtue after Socrates showed him his own shortcomings (*Tusc.* 3.77; cf. *De or.* 1.204); and he notes Socrates' observation of a treasure train in which he exhibits his disdain for money (*Tusc.* 5.91). But such use of Socrates is in keeping with a general trend in Hellenistic philosophy,⁶ and there appears to be nothing distinctive about Cicero's own practice.

(3) Cicero cites moral precepts that are attributed to Socrates, such as his line on glory ("be what you wish to be thought to be," *Off.* 2.43), his declaration that he is a citizen of the cosmos (*Tusc.* 5.108), his views that the wise man lacks no part of happiness (*Fin.* 5.84, 5.88) and that virtue is necessary for happiness (*Nat. D.* 2.167; *Tusc.* 5.47, 5.119), and his conviction that utility and virtue are in truth inseparable (*Leg.* 1.33; *Off.* 3.11, 3.77). Cicero also records that Socrates believed in divination and divine warnings (*Div.* 1.5, 1.87) and acted accordingly (*Div.* 1.123).⁷ Such references to Socrates come predominately in the context of discussion of Stoic precepts, reflective of Socrates' place as a paragon of virtue in that school, and indicative of the close affinity Cicero saw between Socrates' moral commitments and Stoic ethics (explicit comparisons at *Parad. Stoic.* 5; *Luc.* 136; *Nat. D.* 2.167; *Off.* 3.11, 3.77; *Div.* 1.5, 1.87; *Tusc.* 3.10, 5.47, 5.119; *Att.* 14.9.1). But the Stoics themselves also stressed the affinity,⁸ and in such cases Cicero in all likelihood is reiterating the reception of Socrates in his Stoic sources.

4 For detailed discussion of Socrates' positive status as a model or inspiration in the Hellenistic schools of philosophy, see in particular Döring 1979. Note that the Epicureans and certain Peripatetics presented Socrates in a negative light; see further Kleve 1983 and Long 1988, 155–6.

5 The story was probably first laid down in Socrates' follower Phaedo's dialogue *Zopyrus* (DL 2.105), but it is not clear that Cicero read Phaedo's work. For further discussion of the episode, see McLean 2007, 66–75.

6 See further Trapp 2007, 58–61.

7 Here he mentions a massive collection of Socrates' premonitions compiled by the Stoic Antipater (*Div.* 1.123).

8 For detailed discussion of the Stoics' appropriation of Socrates up to and including Cicero's time, see, for example, Long 1988; Vander Waerdt 1991 and 1994b; Striker 1994; DeFilippo and Mitsis 1994.

There are, however, some relatively well-defined areas where Cicero engages in a distinctive fashion with the figure of Socrates—and, as this chapter will demonstrate, they all in some sense concern politics or Cicero's own efforts to integrate philosophy into Roman culture. In the first section I explore Cicero's portrayal of Socrates as the first genuine moral philosopher. Here I outline Socrates' place in Cicero's conception of the history and development of philosophy until his own time, and I also highlight what he considers to be positive elements of Socrates' philosophical legacy. In the second section I examine Cicero's critique of Socrates' separation of oratory from philosophy, which he judges to be a pernicious aspect of Socrates' legacy that is still being felt in his own day. Here I show how Cicero himself seeks to bring oratory and philosophy together so as to advocate a different mode of philosophical practice, which promises to be more effective than that bequeathed by Socrates. In the third and final sections I examine Cicero's use of the life of Socrates as a guide for conduct in the public as well as the private sphere. Here I show that Cicero considered Socrates to offer a model for dignified political action under tyranny, and to provide an example for upright conduct in the face of death and the vicissitudes of fortune.

1 Cicero on Socrates and Moral Philosophy

In the *Tusculan Disputations* Cicero famously declares that Socrates first brought philosophy down from the heavens, breaking from the sort of natural philosophy undertaken by his predecessors: *Socrates autem primus philosophiam devocavit e caelo et in urbibus collocavit et in domus etiam introduxit et coegit de vita et moribus rebusque bonis et malis quaerere* ("But Socrates first called philosophy down from the sky and placed it in cities and indeed introduced it into the home and forced it to inquire about life and customs and good and evil things," *Tusc.* 5.10; cf. *Acad.* 1.15). In Cicero's earlier dialogue *De re publica* the character Scipio applauds Socrates for this action, going on to suggest that his rejection of natural philosophy was total and his reasoning blunt: either the questions of natural philosophy are too difficult for humans to understand or they are of no importance to human life (*Rep.* 1.15; cf. *Luc.* 123).⁹ The historical accuracy of such a depiction of Socrates is of course highly questionable. It

9 Here Cicero is in all likelihood drawing on Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.11–16. In the Hellenistic period a doxographical tradition about Socrates' rejection of natural philosophy in favor of ethics developed, for which Xenophon's account is the model. For further discussion, see Kerschensteiner 1985; Long 1988; Vander Waerdt 1994a, 48–52.

is not difficult to see interest in ethical topics among the Presocratics,¹⁰ and there is compelling evidence from Aristophanes' *Clouds* and Xenophon (*Sym.* 6.6–8, 7.3–4; *Mem.* 4.7.4–5) that Socrates did not abandon interest in questions of natural philosophy until relatively late in his life, if indeed he did at all.¹¹ It is striking, then, that in *De re publica* Tubero immediately questions Scipio's portrayal of Socrates, citing Plato's depiction of Socrates in support of the view that he valued number, geometry, and harmonics in the fashion of Pythagoras (1.16), only to be told by Scipio that Plato put his own learning into Socrates' mouth and so his portrayal of the historical Socrates stands. This exchange shows nicely how literary evidence that does not fit the desired picture of the historical Socrates can be explained away—but why should there be such an emphasis on Socrates' complete turn to moral philosophy?

Any effort to enshrine Socrates as the true originator of moral philosophy invites divorcing him sharply from previous philosophical traditions, and Cicero appears strongly committed to the view that Socrates is the true originator (*De or.* 1.42; *Rep.* 3.5; *Leg.* 1.56; *Brut.* 31; *Fin.* 5.88; *Tusc.* 3.8, 5.10). Moreover, such a view necessarily links back to Socrates himself all subsequent philosophy that deals with ethics, which offers possibilities of its own. Cicero makes the links explicit for his Roman readers. Thus, in *De oratore* (1.42) Socrates is contrasted with Democritus, Pythagoras, and the physicists (*physici*), while being depicted as the fountainhead (*ab illo fonte et capite Socrate*) of the philosophical schools that are interested in ethics and the questions of how to live well. The same view of Socrates is put forward in the *Tusculan Disputations*: "Socrates, from whom all this philosophy which is about life and about morals (*de vita et de moribus philosophia*) has flowed" (3.8; cf. 4.6).¹² Cicero thereby promotes the line that with Socrates a new mode of philosophy is born, which all subsequent philosophical schools have followed in so far as they are committed to the notion that virtue, whatever it may be, is necessary for happiness (*nec dubitatum quin in virtute omnis ut bene sic etiam beate vivendi spes poneretur*,

10 Indeed, Cicero himself concedes that Socrates' contemporary Democritus (c. 460–370 BCE) had an interest in ethics (*Fin.* 5.87–8), while contriving to give Socrates priority owing to the supposed crudeness of Democritus' thinking. Cicero is also aware of Archelaus, the pupil of Anaxagoras and Socrates' teacher (*Tusc.* 5.10), to whom Diogenes Laertius attributes interest in ethics and politics (2.16).

11 For critical discussion of the inaccuracy of the tradition surrounding Socrates, see in particular Vander Waerdt 1994a.

12 To be sure, at the start of the fifth book of the *Tusculan Disputations* (5.1–9) Cicero presents philosophy as having ethical consequences before Pythagoras and Socrates, as a result of the ancient pursuit of wisdom and virtue that is distinguished most of all by the seven "wise men." Cicero presents this ancient practice as developing first into the pursuit of natural philosophy, followed by Socrates' turn to systematic moral philosophy (5.10–11).

Fin. 5.88). Cicero thus clearly indicates to his Roman readership that Socrates is not only a revolutionary figure who holds pride of place in the history of moral philosophy, but also that his original contributions remain at the core of all the seemingly disparate philosophical movements that one might consider in the present day.¹³

This portrayal of Socrates is highly pertinent to Cicero's own endeavor to bring philosophy to the Romans. Throughout his philosophical works, and particularly in the prefaces, Cicero is concerned to define a proper place for philosophy and philosophical practice in Roman society (e.g., *De or.* 1.1–4; *Rep.* 1.7–13; *Leg.* 1.5–13; *Fin.* 1.1–12; *Nat. D.* 1.6–8; *Acad.* 1.4–12).¹⁴ Through his positive presentation of Socrates' revolution in philosophy, Cicero encourages his Roman readership to follow his example and focus on questions of ethics and living well, rather than on the more abstruse subject of natural philosophy that is to the fore in Lucretius' poem *De rerum natura* and the work of the Epicurean Latin prose writers Amafinius, Catus, and Rabirius, Cicero's competitors in the Roman philosophical marketplace (*Fin.* 2.12; *Acad.* 1.5–6; *Tusc.* 1.6, 2.7–8, 4.6–7; *Fam.* 15.16–19).¹⁵ Such sentiments are expressed in the first book of *De re publica* (1.15–16). Further examples can be found in the preface to the third book, where Cicero contends that the foreign learning that originated with Socrates (*a Socrate adventiciam doctrinam*) should be alloyed to traditional Roman morals and customs (3.5–6), and in the *Tusculan Disputations*, where Cicero encourages his readers to pursue the “true and refined philosophy” (*verae elegantisque philosophiae*) which started with Socrates, rather than the easy to grasp and seductive Epicureanism offered by Amafinius and his ilk (4.5–7). Cicero thus stresses that the sort of philosophy that befits the Romans is not natural philosophy, particularly as practiced by the Epicureans, but rather the sort associated most of all with Socrates—namely, moral philosophy.

Cicero also suggests that the Socratic method offers a mode of doing philosophy that befits the Roman context. Modern scholars often stress that there are two key elements of Socrates' method: the use of irony, and the focus on refuting through questioning the claims put forward by others (the

13 Cicero often highlights Socrates' connection to the Stoics, Peripatetics, and Academics (e.g., *De or.* 3.60–8; *Fin.* 5.86–96; *Acad.* 1.3, 1.15–18; *Luc.* 15; *Tusc.* 4.6, 5.10–11, 5.119; *Off.* 1.2, 3.11). He also links Socrates to hedonistic ethics through Socrates' follower Aristippus (*De or.* 3.62; *Tusc.* 2.15).

14 See further, for example, Schmidt 1978–9; Hall 1996; Fox 2007, 25–37; Gildenhard 2007, 8–63; Baraz 2012; McConnell 2014, 33–61.

15 On Cicero's engagement with the Epicurean prose writers, see further Howe 1948 and 1951; Maslowski 1978; Rawson 1985, 284–5; Smith 1995. Cicero explicitly acknowledges their status as competitors but he is notoriously silent on Lucretius.

elenchus).¹⁶ Cicero's conception of the Socratic method appears somewhat different: he is ambivalent about the place of irony, and he characterizes the Socratic method as involving more than the straightforward refutation of views put forward by others.

Cicero only occasionally uses the Latin term *ironia* (his translation of the Greek εἰρωνία) with regard to Socrates, and on the whole he offers a qualified evaluation of Socrates as an ironist or practitioner of irony.¹⁷ He presents Socrates' use of *ironia* as a prime example of urbane wit and conversational art, when defining it as the assumption of a simplicity that draws comment out of others (*De or.* 2.270; *Brut.* 292; *Off.* 1.108).¹⁸ In the *Brutus* he more forcefully says that *ironia* was a defining feature of Socrates, in the sense that he claimed to possess no wisdom but attributed it to others before showing them to lack it too (cf. *Luc.* 15), something that Plato, Xenophon, and Aeschines accurately capture in their Socratic dialogues (292; *Luc.* 74). Here Cicero declares that irony particularly befits Socrates, despite the criticisms of figures such as Epicurus,¹⁹ and it is a sign of his wit and elegance (292). However, although admirable in Socrates, it by no means appears to be a demeanor suitable or recommended for everyone or every occasion (292–299; *Luc.* 15). On this evidence, it is more as a conversationalist than as a philosopher that Socrates deserves praise specifically on account of his irony; Cicero, it seems, is dismissive of any essential role irony might have in philosophical practice.

Furthermore, Cicero does not portray the Socratic method as simply involving refutation of views put forward by others, providing instead a more complex picture. He presents as a distinctively Socratic practice the general method of discussing everything in a skeptical and doubting manner, in which one refrains from making any positive judgments or conclusions of one's own. Such a view appears in a number of Cicero's philosophical works (*De or.* 3.67; *Acad.* 1.16–17; *Luc.* 15; *Fin.* 2.2; *Nat. D.* 1.11; *Div.* 2.150; *Tusc.* 1.8, 5.11). It also appears in the work of his youth, the rhetorical handbook *De inventione* (*De or.* 1.5), where Socrates is associated most of all with employing the method of inductive argument (*inductio*), in which one first compels an interlocutor to

16 See, most famously, Vlastos 1991.

17 Long 1988, 150–2, shows that in the Hellenistic period Socrates' status as a ironist was not considered an overly important or positive aspect of his philosophical legacy.

18 Cicero is clearly relying very heavily here on the image of Socrates in the Socratic dialogues. At *De officiis* 1.104 Cicero says that the books of Socratic philosophy contain refined, polite, clever examples of speaking in jest; and at 1.134 he holds up the Socratics as offering the best models of the art of conversation.

19 On Epicurean criticisms of Socrates' irony, see further Riley 1980; Kleve 1983; Vander Waerdt 1989; and Campos-Daroca (in this volume), 237.

give assent to an undisputed fact or premise, and then through that original agreement garners assent to other more doubtful facts or premises on the basis that they resemble the original (1.51–3, 1.61; cf. *Top.* 43). Here Cicero says that Socrates preferred this method as he wished to present no positive arguments of his own but rather to use his interlocutor's own assertions to lead him to a surprising conclusion (1.53).²⁰ Socrates is also associated frequently with the practice of arguing against the position of an opponent in order to reach a conclusion that is persuasive (*probabile*) or close to the truth (*veri simile*) (e.g., *De or.* 3.67; *Acad.* 1.16–17; *Luc.* 15; *Fin.* 2.2; *Nat. D.* 1.11; *Div.* 2.150; *Tusc.* 1.8, 5.11).²¹ Cicero routinely declares openly that he himself employs this adversarial Socratic method (which he aligns very closely with the skeptical New Academy),²² as well as the related Peripatetic and Academic method of balanced *in utramque partem* argument (e.g., *Nat. D.* 1.11–12; *Tusc.* 1.8, 5.11; *Div.* 2.150),²³ even though it has largely gone into abeyance in Greece in his own

20 Cicero draws explicitly on an unnamed dialogue by Aeschines in order to illustrate Socrates' use of *inductio* (1.51).

21 Cicero is, however, inconsistent regarding Socrates' epistemic attitudes when practicing philosophy in this manner. At times Cicero presents Socrates straightforwardly as a skeptic who thought that nothing can be known except that one knows nothing (*Luc.* 74; cf. *Acad.* 1.16). Moreover, at *Academica* 1.17 the character Varro declares straightforwardly that Academic and Peripatetic philosophers, beginning with Plato and Aristotle (cf. *Luc.* 15, 74), abandoned Socrates' skeptical stance and instead sought to develop their own coherent dogmatic systems of thought. At other times, Cicero suggests that Socrates was himself a dogmatist, either in the sense that he did in fact have firm beliefs about the nature of virtue and living well (e.g., *Parad. Stoic. praef.* 5; *Luc.* 136; *Nat. D.* 2.167; *Off.* 3.11, 3.77; *Div.* 1.5, 1.87; *Tusc.* 3.10, 5.47, 5.119; *Att.* 14.9.1—in these cases Socrates is often allied closely with the Stoics), or in the sense that he at least left space open for dogmatism since his own ironic practice did not require him to hold no positive views at all but rather to give the semblance of that (see especially *Luc.* 15, where Socrates is differentiated from the skeptic Arcesilaus on this account). Much of this is likely symptomatic of discrepancies in Cicero's source material arising from the appropriation of Socrates by various competing interests. For further discussion of such issues, see in particular Glucker 1997.

22 Cicero explicitly attributes this Socratic practice to the Academic skeptics Arcesilaus and Carneades (*De or.* 3.67; *Fin.* 2.2; *Nat. D.* 1.11; *Tusc.* 5.11). On Cicero's Latin terminology and its links to the epistemological position of the New Academy, see in particular Glucker 1995. For critical discussion of the Academics' appropriation of Socrates, see further, for example, Shields 1994; Annas 1988 and 1994; Long 1988, 150–71.

23 It is worth stating that Cicero does not usually associate Socrates closely with this relatively similar practice of arguing on both sides of the question (*in utramque partem*). Rather, Cicero routinely gives priority for this style of reasoning to Aristotle (*De or.* 3.80; *Or.* 46; *Fin.* 5.10; *Tusc.* 2.9), notwithstanding one instance in which he gives priority to Plato (*Acad.* 1.46). In the *Tusculan Disputations* (2.9) he associates the method with the Peripatetics and the Academy in general (cf. *De or.* 3.107). It would seem, then, that this method is established after Socrates and is to be contrasted with the more focused

day (*Fin.* 2.2; *Nat. D.* 1.11). Cicero thus indicates two things: the skeptical and adversarial Socratic method is genuinely positive and productive, involving more than the rejection of ideas put forward by others; and it ought to be maintained, and indeed adopted, on the part of his own Roman readers.²⁴

Cicero also signals that Socrates' life in itself provides evidence that the pursuit of virtue and the practice of the Socratic method have tangible positive results. He stresses that, despite claiming to know nothing and engaging only in adversarial argument, Socrates always praised virtue and encouraged its pursuit (*omnis eius oratio tamen in virtute laudanda et in hominibus ad virtutis studium cohortandis consumebatur*, *Acad.* 1.16; cf. *De or.* 1.204); it is implied that the exercise of reason in moral examination in itself makes one a better person, a lesson that the Zopyrus episode captures in the case of Socrates himself (*Fat.* 10; *Tusc.* 4.80), and that also applies to everyone, as Cicero stresses when he declares reason to be a kind of Socratic medicine (*ratio quasi quaedam Socratica medicina*, *Tusc.* 4.24).

In sum, Cicero presents Socrates as the founder of moral philosophy and of the method of using reason to examine life. He appeals to Socrates when selling a positive vision of philosophy to his own Roman audience.²⁵ Indeed, in a certain sense Cicero invites his readers to identify himself as a Roman Socrates: through his philosophical works he is bringing philosophy down from the abstruse Greeks into the very homes and customs of the Romans,²⁶

adversarial Socratic method (cf. *Acad.* 1.17). For critical discussion, see in particular Long 1995, esp. 52–8; also Reinhardt 2000. The idea that balanced *in utramque partem* argument is Socratic is, however, suggested strongly in a letter to Atticus from 60 BC: *venio nunc ad mensem Ianuarium et ad ὑπόστασιν nostram ac πολιτείαν, in qua Σωκρατικῶς εἰς ἑκάτερον, sed tamen ad extremum, ut illi solebant, τὴν ἀρέσκουσιν* ("I come now to the month of January and to my plan and course of policy, in which I shall argue on each side in a Socratic fashion, but nevertheless in the end, as those men were accustomed to do, I shall state my position," *Att.* 2.3.3; cf. *Nat. D.* 1.11; *Div.* 2.150). Through the reference to the plural *illi* ("those men"), Cicero appears to align himself with a philosophical group who employ this particular "Socratic" practice. There is dispute over whether he means the Old or the New Academy here; see further Griffin 1995, 334–5; Steinmetz 1989; Gucker 1988. For detailed discussion of the letter, see McConnell 2014, 51–3.

24 See Gorman 2005 for analysis of Cicero's own use of the Socratic method in his dialogues.

25 Cicero's strategy presumes a positive and widely held view of Socrates among first century BCE Romans, akin to that evident in the case of Plato (e.g., *Q. fr.* 1.1.29; *Fam.* 1.9.12; *Rep.* 4.5; *Leg.* 3.5, 3.32; *Nat. D.* 2.32; *Tusc.* 4.71). It is difficult, however, to ascertain the full extent to which Cicero's Roman contemporaries were well-disposed towards Socrates. He is compared favorably to the "cheat" in a joke in Plautus' comedy *Pseudolus* (465); Lucilius mentions him in his *Satires* (fr. 27.709, 28.742, 29.832), as does Varro in his *Menippean Satires* (fr. 6, 99, 490), both without any hint of negativity.

26 Cicero employs such motifs at *De legibus* 3.14, and also in a letter to Cato (*Fam.* 15.4.16): *solī prope modum nos philosophiam veram illam et antiquam, quae quibusdam otī esse ac desidiae videtur, in forum atque in rem publicam atque in ipsam aciem paene deduximus*

and in his letters and philosophical works he portrays himself as endeavoring to live an examined and virtuous life in the context of his own native Roman culture and society.²⁷

2 Cicero against Socrates on Oratory

Cicero, however, is not an uncritical follower or champion of Socrates. In his dialogue *De oratore* Cicero stresses that Socrates' legacy has some pernicious elements that need remedying. He focuses in particular on Socrates' separation of philosophy and oratory, a stance that appears most strikingly in Plato's *Gorgias* and that Cicero claims has been accepted and maintained by the philosophical schools that follow Socrates (3.61–8). Cicero critiques Socrates' position, offering an alternative account of the relationship that brings philosophical and oratorical practice into harmony. Here, in broad terms, Cicero clearly is following the example of Aristotle, who, he says elsewhere, reacted to the great rhetorician Isocrates' turn from legal and political matters (*a causis forensibus et civilibus*) to empty oratorical elegance (*ad inanem sermonis elegantiam*) by teaching wisdom with eloquence (*De or.* 3.141; cf. *Inv.* 2.7–8; *Tusc.* 1.7; *Off.* 1.4).²⁸ In *De oratore* Cicero cleverly inverts Aristotle's model by promoting the teaching of eloquence with wisdom. Thus, by engaging critically with Socrates in this fashion, Cicero not only elevates oratory to a weighty art that involves appropriate training in philosophy and law (among other things); he also signals to his Roman readers a new mode of doing philosophy, which fits more readily with the pressures and expectations of Roman political culture.²⁹

("We almost alone have brought that venerable and truthful philosophy, which appears to some to be a thing of leisure and idleness, into the Forum and into political affairs and almost into the very battle-line").

27 See further McConnell 2014; Baraz 2012; Gildenhard 2007.

28 The accuracy of Cicero's report of Aristotle's characterization of Isocrates' practice is a matter of dispute; see further Wisse, Winterbottom, and Fantham 2008, 156–9. In a letter to Lentulus Spinther (*Fam.* 1.9.23) Cicero says that *De oratore* embraces both the Aristotelian and Isocratic theories of oratory: in crude terms, the Isocratic promotes eloquence and marginalizes philosophy (at least in the Platonic sense of what philosophy is, as Isocrates himself routinely claims that he is engaging in philosophy—see further Cooper 1985, 85–93) whereas the Aristotelian combines the two although favoring philosophy. The Socratic model, at least as Cicero presents it, clearly marginalizes eloquence in favor of philosophy. Cicero in turn provides a fourth option between Isocrates and Aristotle.

29 On Cicero's self-interested motivations in defending oratory against the critical views put forward by Socrates in Plato's dialogues, see in particular Fantham 2004, 49–77.

Cicero's engagement with Socrates begins in the first book of *De oratore*, when the character Crassus is discussing whether the philosophers and other experts need oratorical skill to convey their knowledge to others. Crassus reports Socrates' assertion that every man is eloquent enough upon a subject that he knows (*omnes in eo, quod scirent, satis esse eloquentes*, 1.63; cf. Xen. *Mem.* 4.6.1; Pl. *Grg.* 455b). This betrays Socrates' view that knowledge alone is sufficient for eloquence, for if one knows then one speaks the plain truth—and what could be more eloquent than that? Crassus says that Socrates' assertion is plausible but not true (*atque illud est probabilius, neque tamen verum, quod Socrates dicere solebat*, 1.63). Rather it is “truer” (*verius*) to say that anyone is unable to speak eloquently on a subject about which he is ignorant (*neque quemquam in eo disertum esse posse, quod nesciat*), and that, even if he knows the subject perfectly, if he lacks oratorical skill, he is unable to speak fluently about what he knows (*neque, si id optime sciat, ignarusque sit faciundae ac poliendae orationis, diserte id ipsum posse, de quo sciat, dicere*) (1.63).³⁰ Here Crassus firmly asserts that knowledge is not sufficient for eloquence, although it is necessary.

Cicero does not immediately pursue this critique of Socrates but next returns to the matter late in the first book, where Socrates' speech in his own defense is cited by Antonius as an episode that proves the effectiveness of oratory (1.231–3). Socrates sought to persuade an audience of what is true and right but he failed, not because he was in fact guilty of the crimes of which he was accused, nor because he knowingly or willingly set himself up to be convicted, but rather because of his lack of skill in oratory (*cum ille damnatus est, nullam aliam ob culpam, nisi propter dicendi inscientiam*, 1.233). Antonius highlights two lessons that this episode demonstrates: first, knowledge of the truth or being right is not sufficient for success in persuading an audience, for the philosopher fails; secondly, knowledge and eloquence are two distinct things (*tantum dico, et aliud illud esse, atque hoc, et hoc sine illo summum esse posse*, 1.233)—eloquence is not simply a matter of stating the truth. Hence, there is no reason to think that the philosophers have the answers to the “rules of eloquence” (*praecepta dicendi*), despite what they claim (1.233); but there is reason to think that oratorical skill is vital if philosophy is to be effective in practical life.

With some of the ground having been set, Cicero embarks on his most sustained critique of Socrates in the third book, when Crassus discusses

30 Note that this argument is made in opposition to that given by Socrates in Plato's *Phaedrus* (259e–262c), whereby “real oratorical skill depends upon and is simply an application of philosophical knowledge of the actual nature of things” (Cooper 1985, 79).

developments in Greek intellectual history pertaining to the relationship between the pursuit of knowledge and practical interests such as politics and oratory (3.56–73).³¹ Crassus praises the old system of education in which the same figure instructed on right action and right speech (3.57). He also praises those men who have combined the practice of oratory with the pursuit of wisdom (3.58–9). He then singles out Socrates for criticism. He is the prime example of someone who chooses not to pursue public affairs and oratory, instead opting solely to pursue wisdom. This is not so terrible in itself, and Crassus stresses that in practice Socrates himself exhibited both wisdom (*prudentia*) and various elements of oratorical skill—*acumen* (“sting”), *venustas* (“charm”), *subtilitas* (“subtlety”), *eloquentia* (“eloquence”), *varietas* (“variety”), *copia* (“fertility”)—so that he always won, whatever side of an argument he adopted (3.60). However, Crassus points out, Socrates went further and erroneously divided the science of wise thinking—philosophy—from that of elegant speaking—oratory—when in fact the two are properly unified together (*hoc commune nomen eripuit, sapienterque sentiendi et orate dicendi scientiam re cohaerentes disputationibus suis separavit*, 3.60).³² Crassus is very critical of Socrates’ division and its maintenance by the various Hellenistic schools that in one way or another follow Socrates (3.61–8). He asserts plainly that separation simply gets the facts wrong (*re cohaerentes*, 3.60), but it also has damaging practical implications, for the perfect orator requires training in philosophy (3.69–71) and, owing to Socrates, the two disciplines not only are taught separately (3.61) but also are now in conflict: philosophers despise oratory and orators despise philosophy (3.72). Further, philosophy is now detached from practical pursuits such as the law, where it has a natural home (3.73). Implied is the situation where philosophers are not effective in practical affairs, and where improperly trained orators are inclined to peddle falsehoods (“making the worse appear the better”). Crassus is adamant that it is better that philosophy and oratory are unified together, thereby allowing philosophy to be effective in practical affairs, the situation that obtained before Socrates’ intervention (3.72–3).³³

Crassus’ portrayal of the proper relationship between oratory and philosophy suggests a decisive break from Socrates and the Socratic tradition.

31 Leeman, Pinkster, and Wisse 1996, 223–65 provide a detailed and helpful commentary.

32 Crassus then declares that Plato’s recording of Socrates’ views caused this erroneous separation to be enshrined in an especially pernicious way (3.61). Note, however, that in *Orator* Cicero seems to attribute a harmonious relationship between philosophy and oratory to the character Socrates in Plato’s *Phaedrus*, since he maintains that the best orators are those like Pericles and Isocrates who have philosophical erudition (15, 41–2).

33 For further discussion of Crassus’ critique, see DiLorenzo 1978 and Vickers 1988, 163–7.

Crassus explicitly rejects Socrates' model when advocating that philosophy has a clearly defined place in practical affairs. Crassus' model fits readily with the expectations of Roman political culture, and it forms a distinctively Roman approach to doing philosophy that avoids the shortcomings of the dominant Greek tradition.³⁴ Cicero himself thus uses Crassus' critique to signpost to his Roman readers a major point of difference between his own philosophical practice and that of Socrates and the Greeks,³⁵ and he encourages them to prefer and to follow the model of philosophy and oratory put forward by Crassus over that maintained by Socrates.

Later in the third book, however, Cicero appears ready to link his model back to Socrates in a positive fashion, when Crassus refers to the debate between the orator and the philosopher embodied by Gorgias and Socrates in Plato's *Gorgias* (3.129). Crassus judges that either Socrates did not prevail because what Plato records never happened (*neque sermo ille Platonis verus est*) or, if he truly did defeat Gorgias, that would prove the fact that Socrates was a better orator (*eloquentior videlicet fuit et disertior Socrates et ut tu appellas copiosior et melior orator*, 3.129)—not that he won simply by virtue of being a philosopher. Further, Crassus says that Critias and Alcibiades learned eloquence through discussions with Socrates, which indicates his ability to teach or to impart oratorical skill (3.139). This admission that Socrates was a skilled orator if he actually defeated Gorgias is important, for it would mean that in practice Socrates did at times achieve the ideal union between philosophical knowledge and oratorical skill—notwithstanding of course the striking failure at his trial (1.231–3), nor the strong antipathy he is reported to have had against oratory (3.122; cf. *Brut.* 31–2).

Cicero entertains the possibility that Socrates succeeded in realizing the ideal union of philosophy and oratory, but crucially only at the level of one-on-one engagements such as he is reported to have had with Gorgias; he failed when it came to combining philosophy and oratory in grander public and political contexts. It is this failure that Cicero seeks to remedy: he advocates taking the proper combination of philosophy and oratory from the conversational to the grander level of political affairs. Thus, through his critical engagement with Socrates, Cicero offers his Roman readers a vision of philosophy that overcomes key problems in the established Greek tradition and that also anticipates a substantive and novel Roman contribution to come; it is also a vision that can be considered to capture and to build on something genuinely Socratic.

34 See further Long 1995, 50–2; Fantham 2004, 54.

35 See further Hall 1996.

3 Socrates and Tyranny

Cicero's interest in Socrates is not limited to his impact on the development of moral philosophy and his influence on philosophical methodology and practice. Cicero also looks to the life of Socrates as a model for his own conduct in the public as well as the private sphere. This is most apparent during two especially dramatic and traumatic periods of Cicero's life: the civil war between Caesar and Pompey (49–46 BCE) and the death of his daughter Tullia in early 45 BCE. In this section the focus is on Cicero's engagement with Socrates during the civil war.

On essentially a daily basis during the early stages of the civil war, Cicero agonizes in his letters to Atticus about what he should do and how he should comport himself—should he throw in his lot with Pompey or should he remain in Italy with Caesar and seek to foster peace?³⁶ In the latter stages of the conflict, after he has returned to Italy and accepted Caesar's clemency, in his letters to a number of correspondents he reflects on his actions and his decisions in the light of what has transpired, in order to defend himself against criticism.³⁷ Cicero appeals to Socrates as a model for his own conduct in both contexts. Consider first the following passage from a letter to Atticus from February 49 BCE:

I am able to die for Pompey willingly; I value no man more highly. But I do not so judge that hope of salvation for the *res publica* rests with him alone. You indicate, in fact, somewhat differently than you usually do, that you think that I should leave Italy, if he leaves it. I do not think that that would be beneficial to the *res publica* nor to my children, moreover neither proper nor morally good. Then: "Are you able to bear the sight of a tyrant?" As if it matters whether I hear him or see him, or as if a more reliable model need be sought for me than Socrates, who, when there were the thirty tyrants, did not set foot outside the gate.

Att. 8.2.4

In order to appreciate the full force of this appeal to Socrates, one needs to know about his actions under the thirty tyrants, for which Plato and Xenophon

36 The relevant letters comprise all of Books 7–10 of the *Epistulae ad Atticum*. Cicero's deliberations are discussed at length in McConnell 2014, 62–114.

37 For further discussion of these letters, see McConnell 2014, 161–94. Judgments about Cicero's conduct in the civil war range from the sympathetic to the damning; see, for example, Mitchell 1991, 232–61; Wistrand 1979, 61–161; Stockton 1971, 254–60; Gelzer 1969, 243–53.

are the two key sources (Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.30–9; Pl. *Ap.* 32c3–d8, *Ep.* 7.324c3–325b1). According to them, when Athens was placed under the rule of the Thirty by Sparta in 404 BCE, Socrates did not desert the city like many other notable men who fled from fear, had their possessions taken and were exiled, or went into opposition against the new rulers from outside the city.³⁸ Rather he continued to be involved in public life: he evidently had dealings with the Thirty, some of whom, such as his former student Critias, were men with whom he had close personal ties. Socrates apparently stuck to his mode of interacting critically with his fellow citizens. Xenophon recounts how a law was passed forbidding the teaching of “the art of words” which was directed at Socrates (*Mem.* 1.2.31). Further, he is presented as not giving up his philosophical principles. In Plato’s *Apology* Socrates himself recounts how he was ordered to arrest Leon of Salamis so that Leon could be executed but refused to partake in such a dishonorable action and simply went home (32c3–d8); and in the *Seventh Letter* “Plato” describes how the tyrants ordered Socrates to arrest a condemned citizen so that he would be complicit in their regime but he refused, risking terrible punishment (7.324e1–325a4). Thus, Socrates stayed at Athens during the reign of the Thirty but still acted properly, continued to speak frankly, and refused to give credence or esteem to the regime.

By appealing to the example of Socrates to justify his own proposed actions, Cicero draws attention to the moral questions that are posed in the relationship between the citizen and the tyrant.³⁹ Thus, in this letter to Atticus he raises the concern: “Are you able to bear the sight of a tyrant?” The implied answer, of course, is “no, one should not accept a tyrant.” This in turn suggests that one should either leave one’s city or do something about getting rid of the tyrant. But the example of Socrates under the Thirty shows that citizens should not abandon their city or state, even when it is subject to tyrannical rule. The question then concerns what one should do when subject to a tyrant. The lessons provided by Socrates’ example are only implicit in the letter to Atticus, but Cicero makes them explicit some years later when reviewing his conduct in a letter to Papirius Paetus written toward the end of the civil war:

Thus, it happens that I console myself with both the consciousness of my former opinions and with the regulation of my present conduct, and I may apply that simile of Accius’ now not only to envy but to Fortune,

38 For discussion of the thirty tyrants, see Krentz 1982.

39 The subject of tyranny preoccupies Cicero in his letters to Atticus from early 49 BCE: see further Gildenhard 2006.

which I judge must break, fickle and weak, on a firm and steady mind like a wave on a rock. In fact, when the records of Greece are full of examples of how the wisest men bore despotisms, either at Athens or at Syracuse, when in the servitude of their communities they had in some way their freedom, am I not to think that thus I am able to preserve my position so that I neither offend the sensibility of any man nor damage my dignity?

Fam. 9.16.6

Evidently the example of Socrates under the Thirty provides Cicero with a clear answer: Socrates' actions imply that one is not compelled to take up arms against the tyrant. Rather, one can resist by staying true to one's moral principles and acting justly. So long as one achieves this, living under tyranny is no real evil to the individual—one can remain free even if the community as a whole is in bondage. Moreover, the example of Socrates indicates that one can retain one's dignity or standing under tyranny, in so far as one does not actively or willingly collaborate with the tyrant.

In sum, Cicero aligns himself with Socrates as part of a wider apologetic agenda in his correspondence during the civil war period. In these letters Cicero uses Socrates as an *exemplum* that adds nobility and support to his preferred course of action. The effectiveness of Cicero's appeal to Socrates depends on how much one accepts the analogy between Socrates' and Cicero's situation: if you think Socrates acted with dignity by staying in Athens under the Thirty and conducting himself as he did (as Cicero presumes you will, as the evidence in the "annals of the Greeks" appears clear-cut), then by rights the same judgment should be made about Cicero.

4 Socrates and Facing Death

After the death of his daughter Tullia in February 45 BCE Cicero fell into deep grief and depression. As part of the coping process he composed a formal consolation to himself—the *Consolatio*—and in his *Tusculan Disputations* he continued to explore the moral and existential issues surrounding death, pain, and suffering. In this final section I examine Cicero's engagement with Socrates and the subject of death in the *Tusculan Disputations*.

In the first book Cicero presents Socrates as a model for facing one's own death, following closely Plato's account of Socrates' final days in his *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*:

Socrates did not seek an advocate for his capital trial, nor was he suppliant to his judges, but he showed a free defiance that derived from greatness of soul, not from arrogance (*adhibuitque liberam contumaciam a magnitudine animi ductam, non a superbia*); and on the last day of his life he discussed this very subject [the immortality of the soul] at length; and a few days before, when he could easily have escaped from custody, he refused; and then on the very verge of holding that fatal cup in his hand, he spoke in such a way that it seemed that he was not thrust out to death, but in truth that he was ascending to heaven.

Tusc. 1.71

Cicero attributes Socrates' exemplary actions to his *magnitudo animi*, his "greatness of soul," and he explains the reasoning behind Socrates' actions by repeating the arguments he puts forward in Plato's *Phaedo*—that the soul is immortal; that death is not an evil for the virtuous, only for the wicked; that suicide is nevertheless prohibited, unless god gives us a valid reason to depart; and that philosophy is preparation for death (1.70–5). Cicero thus implies that Socrates possesses greatness of soul (and so acts as he does) as a result of accepting these arguments.

The virtue of greatness of soul is, to be sure, an important concept in the *Tusculan Disputations* as a whole: not long after this passage, Cicero stresses that, with regard to dying well, it is the most important character trait; and he includes Socrates in a list of exemplary historical figures who have exhibited greatness of soul in the face of their own deaths (1.95–103). Cicero nowhere provides a straightforward definition of greatness of soul, but throughout his letters, speeches, and philosophical works it is routinely characterized as involving the following attitudes: disdain for pain and death, contempt for trivial and mundane human affairs, indifference to the vicissitudes of fortune, and selfless service to the *res publica* in the face of danger and personal loss.⁴⁰ Cicero also depicts *magnitudo animi* as a quintessentially Roman virtue, exhibited by illustrious Romans of the past and associated with the Roman people as a whole (*Flac.* 28; *Sest.* 141; *Parad. Stoic.* 12, 16; *Tusc.* 1.2; *Off.* 1.61).⁴¹

40 Pain and death: e.g., *Rep.* 5.7; *Fin.* 3.29. Contempt and indifference: e.g., *Mur.* 60; *De or.* 2.343–4; *Fam.* 1.5a.4, 1.7.9, 5.17.1, 5; *Off.* 1.17, 1.66–8. Selfless service: e.g., *Mil.* 1, 3, 61, 69, 80–1; *Sull.* 1, 14; *Cluent.* 159; *Rab. post.* 3–4; *Balb.* 60; *Planc.* 50; *Flac.* 28; *har. resp.* 43; *prov. cons.* 27; *Off.* 1.69–73.

41 For detailed discussion of Cicero's complex treatment of the virtue of greatness of soul, see further McConnell 2017; Schofield 2009, 204–11; Cullyer 1999, 283–372; Dyck 1996, 183–238; Hellegouarc'h 1972, 290–4; Gauthier 1951, esp. 133–41, 157–8; Knoche 1935.

Cicero indicates that by internalizing the arguments put forward in Plato's *Phaedo* others might also develop greatness of soul and emulate Socrates' exemplary actions in the face of death. Indeed, Cicero explicitly names Cato as a Roman who has followed in the footsteps of Socrates (1.74), and in the *Tusculan Disputations* he encourages his Roman readers to applaud and ultimately to emulate Socrates' example in facing death—which by all reports he himself achieved on December 7, 43 BCE.

5 Conclusion

Cicero's judgment on Socrates is on the whole positive. Cicero presents Socrates as the founder of moral philosophy and of the method of using reason to examine life, and he considers Socrates himself to be a noble paragon of virtue as well as a model for conduct in public and private life. Socrates thus fits readily into the positive vision of philosophy that Cicero presents to his own Roman audience. On the other hand, Cicero also accuses Socrates of being responsible for incorrectly and damagingly setting philosophy against the concerns of practical politics such as oratory. Cicero offers a compelling critique of Socrates' position in *De oratore* and brings philosophy and oratory back into harmony. Thus, with his most sustained critical engagement with Socrates, Cicero signals that he is advocating a new and distinctively Roman mode of doing philosophy, which breaks from a major aspect of the Socratic legacy that was firmly established in the Hellenistic philosophical tradition. At the same time, by stressing the focus on moral and political concerns, Cicero connects the novel Roman philosophy back to the authoritative and iconic figure of Socrates himself.

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Socrates in Roman Satire

Cedric Littlewood

As a genre which corrects the misguided and the wicked, Roman satire finds some common cause with the practice of philosophy.¹ Juvenal, for example, advises his readers to be content with the little that sufficed for Epicurus or Socrates (Juv. 14.316–20). But its championing of humble truth against intellectualism and authority more commonly sees it ridiculing philosophers, a tendency encouraged by this most Roman genre's suspicion of foreign learning.² Both caricature and more nuanced philosophical engagement are to be found in Roman satire's reception of the endlessly malleable figure of Socrates,³ who had himself, in his Platonic incarnation, adopted patterns of comic ridicule to puncture the pretensions of experts.

Satire receives Socrates in all the plurality of his appropriation and adaptation in the philosophical tradition,⁴ but is not always careful or concerned to distinguish a particular Socrates from a more general philosophical type. The difficulty in making this distinction is familiar from interpretation of the Aristophanic Socrates, and recurs in Roman satiric writing. Horace wrote, albeit with some exaggeration, that Lucilius, his predecessor in the genre of verse satire, patterned his works entirely on Old Comedy (S. 1.4.1–7), and that he drew on it himself.⁵ Persius ended his first programmatic satire choosing as his reader someone familiar with Cratinus, Eupolis, and the “grand old man” (1.123–5). The influence of the Aristophanic Socrates as a model of ridicule is apparent beyond hexametric verse satire in Apuleius' comic novel, *Metamorphoses*, from the later second century CE.⁶ Allusions in Roman satire

1 Cf. Keane 2006, 73–104, on Roman satire's representation of and engagement with the law.

2 Bartsch 2012, 217–18.

3 See Long 2010 on the reception of Socrates in later Greek philosophy as different schools refashioned him with different emphases.

4 See, e.g., Ker 2009, 54–7, on Roman, Stoic-informed versions of Socratic martyrdom, Bryan 2013, 140–2, on Musonius taking his title of “the Roman Socrates” into exile in 65 CE, and Trapp 2003, 29, on the letters of Socrates and the Socratics as a corpus which reimagined the philosopher over a period spanning perhaps the first century BCE to the third century CE.

5 See, e.g., Cucchiarelli 2001, 25–31, on the influence of Aristophanes' *Frogs* on Horace's satiric and Lucilian journey in S. 1.5.

6 On Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* as a “comic-realistic” novel presenting a satirical view of the world, see Holzberg 1995, 61–83.

to Plato's dialogues cue engagement with his construction of Socrates. The *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* are most commonly recalled, with banquets of parasites and posturing fools offering grotesque distortions of philosophical exchange. Verse formulations of this scene inform Trimalchio's dinner in the prose satire of Petronius' *Satyricon*.

This chapter gives a brief contextualizing discussion of attitudes to Greek learning in Roman satire before presenting some case studies in prose and verse of its reception of Socrates. The first case study, at the chronological extremes of the chapter, discusses the fate of a character called Socrates in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* and traces connections between him and the Aristophanic caricature of Socrates. At first glance, naming this faithless lover of a Thessalian witch "Socrates" and placing him in a landscape which recalls the *Phaedrus* seems a passing joke whose humor depends on incongruity: who could be less like the philosophical Socrates than this character? Yet the confusion of sorcery with philosophy is both a concern of Apuleius' and a feature of the representation of Socrates in Aristophanic comedy. Even if this fantastic tale is not a serious critique of Socrates or Platonic philosophy, it is philosophically engaged. The second case study considers what the persona of the Horatian satirist and the form of his conversations owe to the ironies of the Platonic dramatic dialogue. I shall argue that the dubious authorities who populate Horace's poems are frequently parodic versions of Socrates rather than experts whose imperfect understanding is revealed by a Socratic ironist. Satire, like comedy, celebrates the irrepressible and indecorous body. Much of the parody of Platonic models depends on the grossness of their embodiment, their translation to an exaggeratedly material context. Yet such interpretations of Horatian satire simply debasing Platonic philosophy are complicated by Socrates' use of materializing patterns of comic ridicule in the Platonic dialogues themselves. In the final case study I turn to pedagogical erotics and sharply contrasting receptions of this distinctive feature of Platonic philosophy in two satires of Persius.

1 Greek Learning and Roman Satire

Aristophanes' caricature of philosophers is a pattern for Roman mockery, but because philosophizing is a stereotypically Greek activity in Roman society, mockery of philosophers in Latin literature is implicated in a larger set of attitudes to Greek culture.⁷ Satire, this genre at least completely Roman rather

⁷ See Jocelyn 1976–77.

than borrowed from the Greeks,⁸ numbers among its voices a disdain for alien learning. To Juvenal's Umbricius, going into self-imposed exile from a Rome that is no longer Roman, it makes no difference whether some Protogenes (a painter), Diphilus (a comic poet), or Hermarchus (a philosopher) holds sway: they all act from the same "ethnic vice" (*gentis vitio*, Juv. 3.120–1). "Men of Romulus, I cannot endure a Greek city," he declares (3.60–1). Bestius, from Persius' satires, would agree, as he sees Greek culture unmanning the tough farmers of Roman soil:⁹

And Bestius blames the Greek professors: "That's the trouble. Ever since this emasculated know-how of ours arrived in Rome along with pepper and dates, the haycutters have spoiled their porridge with thick oil."

Pers. 6.37–40

Bestius would find a kindred spirit across the years also in Plautus' Curculio, shouldering Greeks out of his way in the streets of a comedy Epidaurus:

Yes, and as for those cloaked Greeks that stroll about with heads covered and stalk along stuffed with books and provision-baskets ...

Plaut. *Curc.* 288–9

All Greeks have a taste for learning and all Greeks, says Umbricius, are comic actors (*natio comoeda est*, Juv. 3.100), as a nation driven by unbridled lusts for boys, girls, wives, and grandmothers (109–12). This is worth remembering when one considers the reception in Roman satire of Socrates, whose distinctive satyr-like physiognomy seemed to promise indecency and lechery,¹⁰ in whose philosophy (in his Platonic persona) the erotic was so prominent. Socrates in Roman satire is a reception of the famous philosopher and a representative of invasive Greek culture more generally.

Roman satire's nostalgia for an Italian golden age is commonly undermined in laments that cannot but be read parodically. Juvenal looks back to a time before the neoterics of the Greek "new wave," when wives did not, like Catullus' Lesbia, lament the death of a sparrow, but, hairier even than their

8 So Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.93: *satira quidem tota nostra est*.

9 Cf. Horace's epistle to Augustus, where rustic *libertas* is surrendered (*Ep.* 2.1.139–60) and Romans imitate Greece, captivated by the arts, crawling like a girl-child at her nurse's feet (*Ep.* 2.1.93–9).

10 McLean 2007 and Lapatin 2006, 112, on the type A portrait of Socrates which, "with its round features, pug nose, and thin, receding hair, closely resembles the standard iconography of satyrs."

acorn-belching husbands, offered their breasts to great infants (6.7–10).¹¹ He praises the crude soldier of ages past who smashed Greek art to make adornments for his horse rather than wonder at it, when the only function of art was to fashion images of Rome's imperial destiny for her enemies to see before they died. In these recollections of ecphrases from martial epic, no doubt, "there is a tinge of epic parody."¹² One may remember also Anchises' exaggerated contrast between the superior arts of "others" (which is to say Greeks) in bronze-casting, sculpture, oratory, and astronomy, and the distinctively Roman arts of empire (Verg. *Aen.* 847–53). In the glorious times of Juvenal's fantasy, silver shone only on weapons. And then the tone of the scene (11.100–109) is undercut: "all these things then you could envy—only if you are a little bit covetous" (11.110).

In these examples the satirist himself laments the passing of Rome's glory, but the accusations of "emasculated Greek know-how" in Persius' sixth satire or of predatory Greek lust in Juvenal's third are voiced by other characters in dialogue. Bestius has Horatian origin as a man whose savage judgment is more severe for his own past weakness (*Ep.* 1.15.37), and is of a type with the goat-smelling race of centurions whose ignorant suspicion of Greek learning is a repeated subject of criticism in Persius' satires.¹³ Bestius was invoked by Horace as a comparison to the parasite Maenius. The prejudices of Plautus' comic parasite, Curculio, are themselves a caricature,¹⁴ similarly those of the character Umbricius to whom Juvenal's third satire is almost entirely entrusted. When Umbricius observes a nation of comic actors this as much signals the origins of his invective—from the stereotypes of the comic stage—as it condemns in any simple sense a Greek talent for dissimulation.

2 Aristomenes' Tale of Socrates and the Witches

In the first book of the *Metamorphoses*, the character Aristomenes tells a fantastic tale of the fate of his friend Socrates, who dared to defame and abandon his lover, a Thessalian witch. His throat was cut, his heart torn from his body, and a sponge inserted, in which state he survived for a day before

11 Against Catullus' neoteric influence cf. Pers. 1.99–102 with Bramble 1974, 128–9.

12 So Courtney 1980, 504.

13 See Hooley 1997, 218–19, on Pers. 3.77. Pers. 1 ridicules the emasculated Attis now on Roman lips (1.103–6), but at the same time dismisses a reader who mocks Greek fashions (1.126–8).

14 See further Gowers 1993, 62–6, on the speeches of Plautus' parasites, drooling for the exotic spices of cosmopolitan life.

fatally attempting to drink from a river under a plane tree (*Met.* 1.5–20). In this tale of rationality overcome by passion and the supernatural, the famous philosophical name Socrates surely gives added piquancy to the defeat. The landscape where Apuleius' Socrates dies is remembered from the *Phaedrus*, and in both texts a supernatural intervention (here a witch's curse, in the *Phaedrus* the voice of his δαίμῶνιον) prevents Socrates from crossing the river.¹⁵ Platonic material is worked into the comic novel here as elsewhere,¹⁶ but how are we to read its reception?

Within the text the tale meets with two very different reactions. Aristomenes' companion dismisses it as a most absurd and fantastic lie, while the narrator considers it perhaps credible, but in any event a pleasant means to beguile a tedious journey (*Met.* 1.20). Michael Trapp has argued that the defense in the prologue of this work of an entertaining text, written with Egyptian materials (*Met.* 1.1), is a pointed challenge to Socrates' devaluation in the *Phaedrus* of writing, invented in Egypt (*Phdr.* 274c–275e). If the prologue asserts itself against a "Platonic-philosophical stigmatization of hedonistic speaking and listening,"¹⁷ one may reasonably interpret the opposing reactions to Aristomenes' tale a few chapters later as revisiting the challenge. The frame of the prologue encourages us to read the indignities heaped on "Socrates" in Aristomenes' tale as a playful revenge on the philosopher for his severity. But however playful a revenge, it is philosophically well-informed, as one might expect from the author of three philosophical treatises (*De Deo Socratis*, *De Platone et eius Dogmate* and *De Mundo*).

In Alexander Kirichenko's view, Apuleius offers here "a *jeu d'esprit* based on a comic inversion."¹⁸ The philosopher beneath the plane tree discoursing on the passionate pursuit of transcendent truth could not be more different from the unhappy lecher lost in the irrational wilds of Thessaly, and in this difference lies the comedy. One might equally argue, however, that the comedy lies in a well-established tradition of both caricature and serious confusion as much as incongruity. Even if the philosopher Socrates never in any account of his life consorted with a Thessalian witch, he was comically represented as a sorcerer in Aristophanes and Plato. Accused of sorcery himself, Apuleius claimed that this was the typical charge brought by the uneducated against philosophers, and that he was proud to be numbered among such great men who had

15 Kirichenko 2008, 94, on *Met.* 1.18–19 and Pl. *Phdr.* 229a–b and 242b–c.

16 On Cupid and Psyche (*Met.* 4.28–6.24) recalling the flight of the winged soul in Pl. *Phdr.* see Schlam 1992, 94–8.

17 Trapp 2001, 45.

18 Kirichenko 2008, 95.

incurred this accusation as Empedocles, Socrates, and Plato (*Apol.* 27). Foolish accusers, he said, commonly confuse understanding how the world works with being able by some supernatural power to influence its operation: “in fact they commonly call them magicians, as if they know how to perform what they know happens” (*Apol.* 27). This distinction between knowledge of and action on the world is far from clear in the writings of Empedocles:

Thou shalt change
Black rain to drought, at seasons good for men,
And the long drought of summer shalt thou change
To torrents, nourishing the mountain trees,
As down they stream from ether. And thou shalt
From Hades beckon the might of perished men.¹⁹

Empedocles fr. 111.6–9 DK, tr. W.E. LEONARD

The Socrates of Plato and Xenophon makes no such claims, and refutes them in his Platonic *Apology*, where he claims that his legal accusers follow Aristophanes’ *Clouds* in representing him as investigating what lies beneath the earth and in the sky, when in truth he takes no interest in such things (Pl. *Ap.* 19b–c). This may not be strictly true even of the Platonic Socrates—as a young man Socrates was fascinated by natural philosophy (*Phd.* 96a) and ended his life talking cosmology and eschatology (*Phd.* 108e–114c)—but it is undeniable that the interests of the comic Socrates in *Clouds* diverge widely from the interests of his Platonic counterpart.²⁰ Angus Bowie has argued that the comic Socrates is characterized as a cult-leader whose “Reflectory” (Alan Sommerstein’s translation of φροντιστήριον) threatens the religious foundations of the city, and who is himself invested with the traits of wandering miracle-workers, and that “many of those whom we would now call ‘pre-Socratic philosophers’ ... appear in the tradition with characteristics which would qualify them for the title of *goes* [“magician”].”²¹ In *Birds*, Socrates is described as summoning up dead souls (*Av.* 1553–5). In *Clouds*, Strepsiades, under the influence of Socrates’ teaching, plans to escape interest payments by hiring a Thessalian witch to prevent the moon rising and the day of interest payment ever coming (*Nub.* 749–57). In the comic tradition the idea of Socrates consorting with a Thessalian witch is not so incongruous, a tradition that plays

19 See Lloyd 1979, 34–6, on this passage and more generally on Empedocles as claiming to wield supernatural power.

20 See further Dover 1968, xxxii–lvii.

21 Bowie 1993, 112–24, quotation 114, and Konstan 2011, 86.

not on a fundamental opposition between philosophy and sorcery, but on the kind of confusion which Apuleius laments as typical and Empedocles seems positively to have encouraged.²²

The Socrates of *Clouds* initiates students into the mysteries (μυστήρια, 143) of his philosophical cult. Strepsiades is admitted into communion with the Clouds and into true knowledge of divine affairs only through rituals of initiation: he awaits the arrival of the Clouds sitting on a sacred bed wearing a wreath (254–6) and enters the “Reflectory” asking for a honey-cake to make an offering as if descending to the oracle of Trophonius (506–8). The Platonic Socrates has no temple or rites of initiation for his followers, but the metaphor of initiation into divine truth is one which appears persistently in Plato: in passing in the *Euthydemus* where Socrates describes Cleinias’ interrogation by Dionysodorus and Euthydemus as initiation into sophistic rites (ἱερῶν ... σοφιστικῶν 277e), but more systematically in the *Symposium* (209e) and the *Phaedrus* (250c–d). These dialogues span much of Plato’s career and represent a consistent and distinctive view of Socrates’ conception of philosophy. There are no mysteries or initiation in Aristomenes’ tale, but the mystic strangeness of Socrates, common to both his Aristophanic and Platonic characterizations, may lead us to question to what extent Aristomenes’ Socrates is simply endowed with “the most un-Socratic traits imaginable,”²³ and to what extent his comic Thessalian journey takes him into recognizably Socratic terrain, comically distorted of course. Socrates, let us remember, is the man who, in Meno’s opinion, might in another city have been incarcerated as a magician (ὥς γόης, Pl. *Men.* 80b).

The Aristophanic Socrates trains disciples who are as pale and emaciated as himself (*Nub.* 103, 185–6). On the bed of initiation bedbugs drain Strepsiades of his very life-blood (*Nub.* 712). This characterization mocks intellectuals in general, preoccupied by strange studies and leading an unhealthy and unnatural life,²⁴ but caricatures the mystic asceticism that distinguished Socrates particularly.²⁵ The stereotype of the philosopher careless of his

22 Despite his lament of misunderstanding and misrepresentation in the *Apology* and even as he insists on his innocence of magical arts, Apuleius intermittently assumes the persona of magician in the speech, and is remembered throughout late antiquity as both philosopher and magician. See August. *Ep.* 138.19, Gaisser 2008, 14–38, and Moreschini 2015, 335–63.

23 Kirichenko 2008, 94.

24 Zanker 1995, 32, and Keulen 2003, 11–12.

25 On mystic and ascetic Socrates, see Nussbaum 1980, 71–3, esp. n. 58, and Brown 2007, 2–5, on his image in fifth century comedy as “a man who goes barefoot, wears an old cloak, eats little and does not wash” (2).

appearance is at once an outsider's mockery and a defiant badge of identity, an ugliness cultivated to challenge social decorum and the misplaced value-system which underlies it. Such provocation is associated particularly with the Cynic tradition, which could find a pattern in the tradition of Socrates' unprepossessing outward appearance.²⁶ Socrates first appears in Aristomenes' tale as a ragged beggar: he covers his head in shame, comically exposing all the rest of himself in the process (*Met.* 1.6). Wytse Keulen reads him as an inheritor of a dual tradition, already interwoven, of the deliberately offensive, naked Cynic and the comic or satiric caricature of a philosopher.²⁷ The traditions collude: Socrates exposed is not only a satiric target, a philosopher mocked, but a familiar image of a satirist's sexually aggressive invective.²⁸ For Diogenes Laertius the Cynic exaggeration and distortion of the Socratic pattern was itself already a caricature, an image of "the philosopher gone mad" (Σωκράτης ... μαινόμενος, 6.54). The Apuleian Socrates is a philosopher gone mad, both in this sense and as a character lost in passion, magic, and superstition.

Aristomenes' fantastic tale presents a caricature of the philosopher Socrates, but a philosophically engaged caricature, conversant with Platonic texts even as it makes a case for entertaining frivolity.

3 Horace, the Roman Socrates?

As many have noted, the ironies in Roman dramatic satires, in which the satirist in conversation receives expert opinion from people who betray themselves as less than expert, are reminiscent in form of the ironies of the Platonic dramatic dialogue. In an influential article, "The Roman Socrates: Horace and his Satires," William Anderson argued that the second book of Horace's satires is in this formal sense Platonic-Socratic.²⁹ Damasippus (*S.* 2.3) and Davus (*S.* 2.7) take Horace to task and take over his satire.³⁰ Horace's neighbor Cervius (*S.* 2.6) picks up the conversation at dinner and he, not Horace, tells the famous fable of the town and country mouse. Nasidienus subjects his guests to a banquet-cum-lecture in *Satires* 2.8. Not every interaction with a dubious authority closely recalls the model of a Platonic dialogue, but such conversations may be considered a characteristically Socratic kind of encounter. Quintilian writes:

26 On Socrates' cultivation of this image, see Zanker 1995, 34–9.

27 Keulen 2003, 114–16. On naked Cynics (*nudi Cynici*, *Juv.* 14.309) and theatrical carelessness of personal appearance as an exaggerated statement of plain-living, see *Sen. Ep.* 5.2–5.

28 In addition to Keulen 2003, 116, cf. Rosen 2007, 47–57, on *Iambe/Baubo*.

29 Anderson 1982, 41–9.

30 On the comedy of these extremist moralists, see Schrijvers 1993, 78–9.

... cum etiam vita universa ironiam habere videatur, qualis est visa Socratis (nam ideo dictus εἰρων, agens imperitum et admiratorem aliorum tamquam sapientium)

... when even a whole life may seem to be ironic, as seemed to be the case with Socrates, who was called an ironist because he acted as an ignorant man who marveled at others as if they were wise.

Quint. *Inst.* 9.2.46

In this section I shall consider to what to what extent Horace's satiric conversations are part of a continuum of ironic critique together with Socratic dialogues, and to what extent more productively viewed as their parody and distortion. There is truth in both constructions, but I shall incline to the view that in its celebration of the body, its appetites and indecorous desires, satire, including Horatian satire, is peculiarly suited to undermine and caricature the more rarefied aspirations of philosophy generally and Platonism in particular.

Seneca characterized Socrates as follows:

vir facetus et cuius per figuras sermo procederet, derisor omnium, maxime potentium, maluit illi nasute negare quam contumaciter aut superbe

a witty man and one whose conversation was conducted through figures, a mocker of everyone, particularly of the powerful, he preferred to disagree wittily rather than stubbornly or arrogantly.

Sen. *Ben.* 5.6.6

"Figure" (*figura*) is a very wide-ranging term in Latin literary criticism, but in trying to capture its core meaning Quintilian writes that "a figure, as is clear from the name itself, is some reshaping of speech that is different from the conventional meaning which first presents itself" (*'figura,' sicut nomine ipso patet, conformatio quaedam orationis remota a communi et primum se offerente ratione*, 9.1.4–5). Figurative speech in this sense includes imaginary conversations (*adsimulatos sermones*) which some people call dialogues (διαλόγους) and which other people call in Latin *sermocinatio* (9.2.31). It also includes ironic dissimulation in which the sense of an utterance differs from the meaning of the words (9.2.44–6).³¹ Seneca's characterization of Socrates here as "*facet*us" (witty) and as speaking "*nasute*" is reminiscent of Horace's description of Lucilius as *facet*us, / *emunctae naris* ("witty and of keen-scented nostrils," S. 1.4.7–8). The nose is an organ of perception but is also used to

31 Quintilian reports that some people translate εἰρωνεία as *dissimulatio* (9.2.44).

express scorn and satire. Persius described Horace, in a passage which recalls Horace's description of Lucilius, as *callidus excusso populum suspendere naso* ("clever at tossing up his nose and catching the public on it," 1.118).³² The Elder Pliny described Lucilius as *qui primus condidit stili nasum*, "the man who first invented satiric writing" (literally, "the stylus' nose," *Nat. pr.* 7). Socrates' nosish negations (*nasute negare*) in Seneca's characterization are then not merely witty, but more specifically satiric.

The Latin *sermo*, conversation, is an appropriate term for the dialogues through which Socrates conducted his philosophy, as in the quotation from Seneca above, but it does not have a narrowly philosophical or Platonic resonance, such that Horace's decision to publish *sermones* rather than *satirae* may be taken as his assuming the role of a Roman Socrates. In a summary of his career in his letter to Florus (*Ep.* 2.2.59–60) Horace adds to his *Odes* and *Epodes* (*carmine ... iambis*) Bionean, not Platonic, conversations (*Bioneis sermonibus*). Bion was a Cynic, whose down-to-earth, seriocomic persona owes something to Socrates, but with an abrasiveness which diverges significantly from Plato's Socrates.³³ Socrates may, in illustrating his points by analogy with humble craftsmen, have covered his thought in a satyr's skin (*Pl. Symp.* 221e), but this is some distance from Bion's reported fondness for using vulgar words for things (*DL* 4.52). Bion remarked that if Socrates restrained his desire for Alcibiades he was a fool (*DL* 4.49), a comment that is as un-Socratic, or at least un-Platonic, in tone as it is in content. Socrates could be paired ethically with the Cynic Diogenes, as in Seneca's memory of Socrates as a man who mocked and overcame King Archelaus just as Diogenes would later mock and overcome King Alexander (*Ben.* 5.6.1–7). They could also be paired stylistically: Cynic diatribe, as practiced by Bion and by Horace in his first three satires, is a neo-Socratic Hellenistic form.³⁴ Where there is inheritance there is also divergence: Horace in his Cynic guise harangues more than converses, uses illustrations that are obscene rather than humble, and further, far from revealing his interlocutors as *doctores inepti*, betrays himself as an incompetent philosopher and social performer.³⁵

32 Conington's translation (1874, 28), who notes that "the Scholia here explain '*excusso*' as = '*emuncto*,' adding '*ut e contrario qui stulti sunt mucosi dicuntur*' ['as the opposite of stupid people who are said to have a blocked nose']."

33 See *DL* 4.46–58, Kindstrand 1976, 42–55, on Bion, and Plaza 2006, 27–37, on the seriocomic spectrum. On the influence of Cynic diatribe and Bion on Horatian satire, see Moles 2007, 165–68.

34 So Gowers 2005, 49, and 2012, 58–62, on Horace's self-defeating performance as a street-philosopher in *S.* 1.1.

35 See Freudenburg 1993, 8–27; Turpin 1998.

Cicero advanced the Socratics as models for conversation (*sermo*, in quo *Socratici maxime excellunt*, *Off.* 1.37). Like them one should show respect for one's interlocutors, avoid offensive language, and not talk about oneself and, to the derision of one's audience, appear like "The Braggart Soldier" (*Off.* 1.38).³⁶ Above all, the successful Socratic should take care that his conversation (*sermo*) not reveal some vice in his own character (*Off.* 1.37). By these criteria Horace is less a Socrates in a dialogue than a comic failure of a neo-Socratic preacher, a self-parodizing critic. But before turning to examples of Horace comically failing as Socrates, we should acknowledge that this reading of the satirist as *doctor ineptus* is contested. For Anderson, writing on the first book of satires, "the Horatian satirist is *doctor*. He is a teacher instructing puerile mankind in serious elementary moral truths, but willing to coax us by his laughing, ironic manner in order to impress his truths more effectively in our hearts."³⁷ When Seneca writes either on the value of the *sermo*, in which minds develop in dialogue with each other, or on its dangers, he describes it as "creeping," a humble verb which Horace had famously used to characterize his own *sermones*:

Plurimum proficit sermo quia minutatim inrepat animo

Conversation is especially productive because it gradually creeps into the mind.

Sen. *Ep.* 38.1

Est quaedam dulcedo sermonis quae inrepat et eblanditur

There is a certain sweetness in conversation which creeps in and charms.

Sen. *Ep.* 105.6

nec sermones ego malle / repentis per humum

I would not prefer my own conversations which creep along the ground.

Hor. *Ep.* 2.1.250–1

One may recall here the ant-*sapiens* of Horace's first *sermo*, which crept out (*prorepat*, *S.* 1.37) to add to its store until, in the major theme of the satire, its heap

36 On Cicero's presentation of Socrates as ironist and a master of the art of conversation, see further McConnell (in this volume), 352.

37 Anderson 1982, 35.

was large enough for its needs.³⁸ The heroes of such pedestrian verse are not the magnificent figures of epic, but may yet be exemplary.³⁹ Comic self-parody is undeniably an important element in Horace's satires, but the reminiscence of the creeping Horatian *sermo* in Seneca's positive ideal of dialogic philosophy in *Epistles* 38 suggests that the characterization of the Horatian satirist as braggart-philosopher is no more comprehensive an interpretation than Anderson's interpretation of him as *doctor*. Even if Cicero distinguishes comic offence and display of vice from Socratic dialogue at *Off.* 1.37, at *Off.* 1.104 Socratic dialogue is aligned with Old and New Comedy in offering an elegant and decorous model of humor. Again supporting cooperation rather than contrast between Socratic writing (*Socraticae chartae*) and comedy, Horace at *Ars* 309–22 claims that a poet will learn from the works of the Socratics how to write appropriate dialogue for his dramatic characters.⁴⁰

Damasippus talks of Plato jammed up against comic Menander in Horace's book bag (Hor. S. 2.3.11–12), and points of engagement with Plato's dialogues in his satires offer different images of a Roman Socrates. In the tale of Priapus and the witches, Maria Plaza has detected not just a comic version of the satirist, but a comic version of Socrates, and in this respect the poem is a companion piece to Aristomenes' tale of Socrates and the witches (§2 above).⁴¹ The speaker of *Satires* 1.8 is a wooden sculpture of Priapus set up on the Esquiline Hill to frighten off thieves and birds with his red phallus. Confronted with witches the terrified Priapus lets out a mighty fart which scatters the witches but splits his own buttock. The description of Priapus as a god fashioned by a carpenter (Hor. S. 1.8.1–3) recalls Alcibiades' famous satyr-drama speech (Pl. *Symp.* 222d) in which Socrates is likened to a wooden figure of Silenus, outwardly ugly and ridiculous but inwardly sober and serious (*Symp.* 215a–216d). Beneath the crude and indecent exterior of that Silenus or this Priapus is a divine soul, and Horace's Priapus proudly asserts his divinity: "the carpenter chose that I be a god. A god, then, I became ..." (S. 1.8.2–3). Priapus does banish supernatural terrors and render them ridiculous, Canidia losing her false teeth and Sagana her wig (S. 1.8.48–50), but only by losing control of his bodily functions. In the same way that Socrates resembles Silenus, Alcibiades argued, so his words are

38 On this self-consciously miniature illustration and the link with the "snail's pace of satire" in the passage previously quoted from Hor. *Ep.* 2.1.250–1 see Gowers 2012, 71–2.

39 Compare also Hardie 2009, 162–4, on looking, with philosophical detachment, on human insects in the *Aeneid*. For the Socrates of the *Symposium* as the antithesis of Homeric Achilles, see Belfiore 2017.

40 See further Sedley 2014.

41 Plaza 2006, 208–11.

divine beneath the skin of an outrageous satyr, if only you open them up and look (*Symp.* 221e–222a).

In no plausible reading are either Priapus or his words when opened up “most divine and with very many images of excellence in them” (*Symp.* 222a). This parody of Socrates contains within him, in conspicuous deviation from his model, the spirit only of the uncontrollable body. He is a creature of comedy, akin to Strepsiades who wants to fart in terror at the arrival of the Clouds (*Ar. Nub.* 293–4), divinities whose own thunderous farts are as mighty as the air is limitless (392–3).⁴² As a Silenus with a divine soul Alcibiades’ Socrates offers transcendent philosophy in comic form,⁴³ but Horace’s Priapus offers only that exterior: “Horace employs the outward shape of Socratic irony as a device to win his readers’ sympathy, and indeed to make them expect, and look for, deep wisdom in his satire, without necessarily expressing that wisdom.”⁴⁴ If the joke in the comic drama of the *Symposium* was on Alcibiades, whose frustrated pursuit of physical love falls so parodically short of a philosophical desire for metaphysical truth, the joke in *Satires* 1.8 is on Andersonian readers, disappointed in their search for metaphysical truths inside the cavities of Horace’s Priapus.

Horace’s second book of *Satires* begins with a consultation of an expert, the jurist Trebatius, and in the poems that follow, the satirist’s own voice is displaced by or onto other speakers. This displacement of the satirist’s voice is emphatic at the beginning of *Satires* 2.2:

nec meus hic sermo est, sed quae praecepit Ofellus
rusticus, abnormis sapiens crassaque Minerva

This is not my talk but the instruction of Ofellus
a rustic, an unschooled philosopher of crude intellect.

Hor. S. 2.2.2–3

If the relaying of someone else’s speech is a narratological device characteristic also of Plato’s dialogues,⁴⁵ the second line undermines Ofellus in a manner that is very un-Platonic. When Socrates tells Diotima’s tale he introduces her

42 Aristophanes’ Socrates tells Strepsiades here to stop acting like “goddamned comedians” (*Nub.* 296 with Sommerstein’s (1982, 176) translation and note on τρυγοδαίμονες).

43 See further Blondell 2002, 71–2.

44 Plaza 2006, 208.

45 See Rudd 1966, 170–2, and Freudenburg 2001, 110–13: “the disclaimer ‘this is not my thought’ draws attention to itself as a metalinguistic comment on the new ‘someone else’s’ character of Horatian *sermo*” (112).

as “wise in this and in many other things” (*Symp.* 201d). When Eurymachus attributes his speech to Phaedrus, his framing quotation from Euripides, which Horace here translates, οὐ γὰρ ἐμὸς ὁ μῦθος (“this is not my story,” *Symp.* 177a), recalls through allusion the figure of the wise Melanippe, not some philosopher of crude intellect. The multiplication of characters and potential for irony is similar in both Plato and Horace. Niall Rudd comments, “Clearly he [Ofellus] is supposed to have some kind of independent existence which will prevent the reader from ascribing all the sentiments in the poem to Horace himself.”⁴⁶ Similar points have been made about the relationship between Socrates and Diotima or between Plato and his gallery of characters, but the mask which Horace allows his poem to assume sets the self-appointed philosopher up for a fall.⁴⁷ Ofellus’ lecture on moderation in life is illustrated gastronomically and appears, just as one might expect of someone called “Mr. Cutlet” and whose intellect is thick and dull, excessively material and corporeal in its preoccupations. Ofellus warns:

Indeed, the body, burdened by yesterday’s vices, weighs down also the soul along with it and pins to the ground a particle of the divine spirit.

Hor. S. 2.2.77–79

He imperfectly recalls the Platonic image of the soul in bondage, made corporeal by its subjection to the pleasures and pains of the flesh (*Phd.* 83d). To break this mortal coil Ofellus recommends getting an early night and not mixing boiled and roast meat or shellfish and thrushes (S. 2.2.73–81). One may compare Trimalchio’s learned discourse on his digestion and his confusion of the life-force of the soul with stomach gas.⁴⁸ The particular ineptitude of Ofellus, unable to break free of the material aspect of his symposium, his philosophical discourse imprisoned in the corporeal, is repeated in two other satires in the book.

The opening of *Satires* 2.4 recalls the opening of the *Phaedrus*.⁴⁹ Catius, in the Phaedrus role, sets out to surpass Plato and Socrates:

⁴⁶ Rudd 1966, 171–2.

⁴⁷ On self-depreciation and assumed ignorance as essentially Socratic and a model for Horace, see Moles 2009, 319, on *Epistles* 1. My own view is that the ridicule of a character introduced as a fool of a philosopher, as Ofellus is here, is far from the practice of the Socratic dialogues.

⁴⁸ See Schmeling 2011, 200, on Petron. *Sat.* 47.6 and anathymiasis.

⁴⁹ “My dear Phaedrus, where have you come from and where are you going?” (*Phdr.* 227a).

Where have you come from and where are you going, Catius? “I have no time to stop, so keen am I to make a record of some new rules, such as will surpass Pythagoras and the man whom Anytus prosecuted, and learned Plato.”

Hor. S. 2.4.1–3

These “new rules” are all culinary, and the satire depends on a community of vocabulary between philosophy, gastronomy, and writing, but there are important differences of content and value beneath that community.⁵⁰ Socrates asked Phaedrus whether Lysias, from whose house he was returning, had “feasted him with words” (τῶν λόγων ... εἰστία, *Phdr.* 227b). As Eduard Fraenkel noted, linking *Satires* 2.2, 2.4, and 2.8, it is in the materiality of his literary feast that Horace deviates from Plato.⁵¹ *Satires* 2.8 is an account of Nasidienus’ banquet, which Horace himself does not attend and which the guests ultimately flee. Much of the poem is occupied by the comic poet Fundanius’ report to Horace of Nasidienus’ lecture on fine dining. When Nasidienus speaks as a sage (*sapiens*, 2.8.60), the tragedian Varius can barely conceal his laughter and the satirical Balatro, hanging everything from his nose (*suspendens omnia naso*, 64), offers him a parody of a consolation.⁵² When Nasidienus discourses on the causes and natures of things—specifically on pigeons with no buttocks (91)—the party breaks up altogether. One may prescribe a metaphorical recipe for a philosophically balanced life, as Horace ironically represents Catius as doing,⁵³ but in these poems the materiality of the figure asserts itself to divert the satire from such metaphorical translation into a literal preoccupation with food. *Sapere*, for example, may denote both wisdom and savor, but is debased as wisdom when reduced to a gourmet’s discrimination, when the philosophical feast of words is subordinated to (or even traded for) actual feasting.

50 On which see Bramble 1974, 50–9 and 143–6; Gowers 1993, 158–60.

51 Fraenkel 1957, 136–7, and at greater length on the reworking of these Platonic models, Gowers 1993, 135–79. On the mock symposium as a popular literary form in Horace’s day, see McNeill 2001, 21.

52 On Balatro as an image of Horace’s satiric persona, see Gowers 1993, 169–70 n. 207, on this line and Pers. 1.118. For satiric parody of a consolation, cf. Juv. 13.

53 S. 2.4 ends with Horace eager to “drink in the teachings of a happy life” (95), a line inspired by one of the most sublime passages in Lucretius’ poem of Epicurean philosophy (Lucr. 1.927–8). On its sublimity and influence on Horatian lyric, see Hardie 2009, 217–24.

Nasidienus' failure in this respect is repeated by Trimalchio's in Petronius' *Satyrical*.⁵⁴ One example may suffice. At Trimalchio's dinner Encolpius comments ironically that his host has been "putting philosophers out of business" (*philosophos de negotio deiciebat*, Petron. *Sat.* 56). Gareth Schmeling comments, "Encolpius interprets this *Cena* as the kind of symposium attended by philosophers, but allusions to Plato's *Symposium* remind the reader how low this symposium has sunk."⁵⁵ Most immediately Trimalchio has been holding forth on the divinity of bees,

which vomit honey, though they are said to bring it from Jupiter; and they have stings, because wherever you have a sweet thing there you will find something bitter too.

Petron. *Sat.* 56

Bees are beloved of philosophers and critics, Seneca for example taking their digestion and distillation of select blooms into honey as a model for study and composition.⁵⁶ Even if the idea of bees vomiting honey is not Trimalchio's own,⁵⁷ its juxtaposition with the more poetic tradition of their bringing divine nectar from heaven creates a sharp contrast between more and less material discourses. The vomiting bees look back in tone to Trimalchio's opinion that doctors, who see what lies in the hearts of men—and make him eat duck when he has a fever—have the hardest job. Medical analogies are common in Platonic philosophy, the care of the body presenting a model to be imitated or surpassed in the care of the soul.⁵⁸ The phrase *quid homunciones intra praecordia sua habeant* ("what poor mortals have within their hearts," Petron. *Sat.* 56.2–3) admits both medical and more figurative interpretation: *praecordia* are properly the organs beneath the heart, but also the seat of thought and emotion.⁵⁹ The aside on the duck diet brings us firmly back to the literal and physical realm and cuts off any such figurative extension.

Trimalchio's reflection on the blending of sweetness with bitterness recalls Socrates' discussion of mingled pleasure and pain in the *Philebus*: τὸ δὴ

54 Gowers 1993, 162–3, and Cucchiarelli 2001, 155–6. On the antecedents of Trimalchio's *cena* in Plato's *Symposium* via Horace, *Satires* 2.8 see Sullivan 1968, 125–39. See also Rimell 2002, 22–3, on "the idea that literature is a currency that might be exchanged for a dinner."

55 Schmeling 2011, 229, abbreviations expanded.

56 See Graver 2014 on Sen. *Ep.* 84.

57 Cf. Plin. *HN* 11.31 and see further Schmeling 2011, 229.

58 See, e.g., *Resp.* 408d–410a and Levin 2014 on Plato's rivalry with medicine and its authority to understand and regulate human life.

59 See, e.g., Pers. 1.117 on the satirist Horace playing around his friend's heart (*circum praecordia*).

λεγόμενον πικρῷ γλυκὺ μεμιγμένον (46c).⁶⁰ Such contradictory feelings range from the purely physical to the purely mental, like for example the honey-sweet pleasure of anger, which one might see represented on stage, or like the strange, mixed pleasures of watching a tragedy or comedy (48a–b). For Socrates, the ridiculous are furthest removed from the Delphic injunction, “Know yourself” (48c), but to laugh at such people, whether on the dramatic stage or in the comedy of life, is to feel at once the mixed and therefore flawed emotions of painful envy and pleasurable, malicious laughter (49b–50b).⁶¹ Trimalchio’s passing remark is too vacuous to put Plato’s Socrates out of business, and within a few lines, Giton, like Varius at Nasidienus’ banquet, finds himself unable to contain a laughter long suppressed (*Sat.* 58) at Trimalchio’s inept display. If we recall Socrates in the *Philebus* when listening to Trimalchio, we are struck not only by the greater sophistication of Plato’s philosopher, but also by the austerity of Socrates at his least seriocomic, a Socrates who would disdain not only Trimalchio but the whole satiric banquet.⁶²

4 Seriocomic Socrates in Plato’s Dialogues

The connections which Cicero and Horace make between Socratic and comic dialogue (see above p. 378) were made previously by Aristotle. In *Poetics* 1447b he questions the value of classifying literary imitation by meter. Homer and Empedocles are both hexametric poets, but what have they in common but their meter? Yet at the same time there is no common term that embraces Socratic dialogues and the (prose) mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus on the one hand and imitations in verse on the other. Quintilian too remembers a close connection between Plato’s dialogues and Sophron’s prose mimes:

Sophron ... a writer of mimes, it is true, but whom Plato liked so much that he is said to have had his books placed under his head when he was dying.

Quint. *Inst.* 1.10.17–18

60 So Schmeling 2011, 229, after Smith 1975, 151.

61 See Frede 1985, 178–9, on being “falsely pleased” by a pleasure that does not take true and proper account of propositions which underlie and are implicit if not always immediately visible in the pleasures. Compare also the danger of becoming a comedian in real life through listening to staged or unstaged comic performances at Pl. *Resp.* 606c.

62 Compare p. 371 above on Trapp’s reading of Aristomenes’ tale in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* as a response, cued by reminiscences of the *Phaedrus*, to Platonic critique of literature written simply for entertainment.

The “it is true, but” acknowledges the difference between Plato’s philosophical dialogues and the humble, comic mimes of Sophron with titles such as *The Mother-in-law* and *The Fisherman and the Farmer*. Plato’s alleged enthusiasm for Sophron does not prove an influence on his own dialogues, but Diskin Clay notes well that Socrates’ division of the education of male and female guardians follows the distinction between male and female mimes observed by Sophron. Socrates proposes “to go through with the female drama once we have concluded the male” (μετὰ ἀνδρεῖον δράμα παντελῶς διαπραγνθέν τὸ γυναικεῖον αὖ περαίνειν, *Pl. Resp.* 5.451c). “His language not only recognizes the distinction between the male and female mimes of Sophron, it reminds us that it is possible to see the proposals and the very style of the *Republic* itself as comic and dramatic.”⁶³

In this section I shall discuss continuity between philosophical and comic dialogue, but also points of opposition. The materialist genres of comedy and satire speak through and about the body and its appetites. This distinctive preoccupation is a point of opposition which facilitates the parodic portrayals of philosophical symposia “brought low,” rendered gross in displays of gastronomic learning in Horace’s satires, as discussed in the previous section. But just as one can see the *Republic* as already comic and dramatic itself—not so alien from Sophron’s mimes as one might first assume—so one can find in Plato’s other dialogues patterns of comic ridicule. Andrea Nightingale and others argue that Plato appropriates comedy’s distinctive voice of criticism for his own dramas: “By portraying them as lovers, as flatterers, as cooks, Plato does indeed ‘make a comedy’ of the rhetorician and the politician in the *Gorgias*.”⁶⁴ In the opening lines Callicles tells Socrates that he has just missed “a most urbane feast” (*Grg.* 447a) of Gorgias’ epideictic oratory, only for Socrates to seize on this metaphor of the feast of words, argue that oratory is not a real skill (τέχνη), just a knack (ἐμπειρία, 462c), and that oratory is mere flattery and to politics what gourmet cooking (ὀψοποιητική) is to medicine. Medicine is what the mind chooses for physical well-being; gourmet cooking is the body’s choice (495c–d). It is a line of argument that Socrates had hesitated to take, recognizing that Gorgias might think that he was making fun of (διακωμῳδεῖν, 462e) his way of life.

Like the Paphlagonian in *Knights*, Callicles in the *Gorgias* is made an object of comic ridicule as the lover of Demos / the *dêmos*.⁶⁵ Socrates represents Callicles as loving both Demos, the son of Pylilampes, as well as the Athenian

63 Clay 1994, 37.

64 Nightingale 1995, 190.

65 Nightingale 1995, 187–90.

people, just as he himself loves both Alcibiades and philosophy (*Grg.* 481d). Having established these two kinds of love, Socrates assimilates them in his interrogation. He asks, for example, if anyone has ever become better through “intercourse” (τῇ συνουσίᾳ) with Callicles, much to his irritation (*Grg.* 515b).⁶⁶ On the subject of hedonism, Callicles denies that living free from desire is happy, at which Socrates, flattering him into a reply by praising his manhood, then suggests that if Callicles needs an itch to scratch perhaps the life of a κιναιδός (“pathic”) would be best (*Grg.* 494a–e). Callicles is shocked: “Are you not ashamed, Socrates, to lead the discussion into things like this?” (*Grg.* 494e). The tragedian Agathon and the politician Alcibiades are both made ridiculous in the *Symposium*, where, in Alcibiades’ famous satyr-drama speech (*Symp.* 222d), the image of Socrates as Silenus parallels his seriocomic philosophizing: divine beneath the skin of an outrageous satyr (221e–222a).⁶⁷ In this comic drama the joke is ultimately on Alcibiades himself, ridiculous in his lack of self-knowledge.

If the comedic quality of some Platonic dialogues is widely accepted, the target of that comedy is open to argument. Parallels are commonly drawn, for example, between the utopian Callipolis in *Republic* Book 5 and the satires of a utopian city in *Birds* and *Ecclesiazusae*, but the Platonic comedy is variously interpreted. Nightingale argues that Plato engages with Aristophanic caricature to challenge that mockery: what might seem ridiculous on the face of it is in fact anything but.⁶⁸ Others, like Leah Kronenberg, see Callipolis as satire and locate the positive ideal of the republic not there, but in a republic of participants in dialogue, a city of speech, of which the text’s plurality is an image.⁶⁹ The inclusion of comedy, broadly conceived, in the generic mix is signaled by such devices as making a Sophronic mime out of the separate education of male and female guardians, but the reading of the drama remains open and contestable. Ironic play is characteristic of Socrates’ whole life, at least as constructed by the Alcibiades of the *Symposium* (216e). His elusive and deceptive style of speech challenges the interlocutor to open the argument up, as Alcibiades opened up the Silenus image, and to make sense of it all.⁷⁰ If it is not characteristic of every Socrates, for example Xenophon’s, it is characteristic of the slipperiness of some Platonic dialogues and conversations in Roman

66 See Newell 2000, 30–6, and in summary, “Socrates’ clarity about his own eros compared with Callicles’ inchoate longing, however, lends this often fractious encounter a tone that is considerably more comedic than tragic” (30).

67 So Patterson 1982, 85–90. On the comic εἰκὼν of Socrates as Silenus, see Dover 1980, 164.

68 Nightingale 1995, 177–9.

69 Kronenberg 2009, 71–2, and also Saxonhouse 1978.

70 See Vlastos 1991, 32–44, on the importance of this text in defining this Socratic persona.

satire, which withhold an authoritative voice in favor of a dialogue of retold and comically distorted voices.

Disagreement about the function of comic tropes within Platonic dialogues, and in particular as to who or what is touched by ridicule, carries over into the reception of an already comic Socrates in Roman satire. The act of reception only adds a further layer of dialogic irony. The appearance of the prostitute Naevolus in Juvenal 9 well illustrates the challenge of securely pinning down the targets of criticism:

Naevolus, I'd like to know why I so often run into you looking gloomy with
an overcast frown like the beaten Marsyas.

Juv. 9.1–2

As Susanna Braund has noted, the allusion to Marsyas triggers a memory of Alcibiades' characterization in the *Symposium* of Socrates as satyr, and this is just the first point of contact with that dialogue. Alcibiades represented himself as "enslaved" by Socrates; Naevolus has literally been a sex-slave of an ungrateful master and so on.⁷¹ Is the philosopher Socrates mocked by this caricature, or rather Naevolus for having recast him in so mercenary and sordid a fashion? That Naevolus is a *doctor ineptus* seems inarguable. His obscene rephrasing of Homer (Juv. 9.37 rephrasing *Od.* 16.294) and his quasi-philosophical reflections on the merits of his chosen profession⁷² mark him as a caricature of some kind, one of those whose philosophical veneer conceals depravity.⁷³

There's no trusting appearances. After all, isn't every street packed with
grim-looking perverts? Do you criticize disgusting behavior when you
yourself are the most notorious digging-hole among Socratic pathics?

Juv. 2.8–10

This second satire, on hypocritical moralists, takes aim at people who display plaster casts of Chrysippus, replicas of Aristotle, Pittacus,⁷⁴ and Cleanthes,

71 *Symp.* 215a5–222b7 and Braund 1988, 146–7, on other correspondences.

72 With Courtney 1980 ad 430 and 185.

73 See also Trapp 2007, 249–50, and Courtney 1980, 120, on Quint. 1 *pref.* 15 and other texts.

74 Courtney 1980, 124, comments that the inclusion of Pittacus is "somewhat incongruous," but if Socrates could hang philosophical argument on the words of Pittacus (Pl. *Prt.* 339c–346e), the inclusion of his replica among philosophers is legitimate enough. Compare also Cicero's inclusion of the Seven Sages in his history of philosophy at *Tusc.* 5.3.

but whose lives are no less hollow an imitation.⁷⁵ The problem here is not the philosopher originals, but their superficial imitators.⁷⁶ Naevolus is no Socratic pathic—he is a plower of fields rather than a digging-hole (*foderit agrum*, 9.45; cf. *fossa*, 2.10)—but his entirely materialistic interpretation of desire marks him as the antithesis of the Platonic Socrates. If, as Braund argues, his offensiveness “recalls the popular conception—or misconception—of the Cynic,”⁷⁷ he may represent in part a philosophical critique, a satirical presentation of Diogenes Laertius’ view that Diogenes the Cynic was Socrates gone mad.⁷⁸ His appearance as the satyr Marsyas, which introduced the comparison with Socrates and the engagement with Plato, is, however, no simple marker.

In the *Symposium* Marsyas is presented as an image (εἰκών) of Socrates, but he is also an image of his creator, Alcibiades, the drunken author of a satyr-drama whose real point, Socrates says, is to secure Agathon’s favors (222c–d).⁷⁹ Alcibiades arrives at the banquet drunk, accompanied by a flute-girl and wearing the ivy and ribbons of a worshipper of Dionysus (212d–e), and then likens Socrates to the flute-playing Marsyas (215b–c) and the attraction of philosophy to Bacchic madness (218a). The outward form of a drunken, lecherous, and ridiculous satyr is to some extent an image not of Socrates but a projection of Alcibiades’ desires and superficial conception of *erôs*.⁸⁰ When we note that Marsyas-Naevolus is a sex-slave, as metaphorically was Alcibiades, we should note not only the comic literalizing of the trope, but its origin in Alcibiades. This complicates enormously the reception of this particular figure in Roman satire and how we might generalize about the relationship between philosophical dialogue and its satiric double. The prostitute Naevolus, the indiscriminate lover-for-hire, is a parody of Socrates, gross and debased in satire’s characteristically materialist discourse. He is a figure beyond the pale of any Platonic dialogue. At the same time, however, he may also be read as a

75 So Uden 2015, 66.

76 An argument complicated by the satirist’s assumption of the mask of the woman Laronia under which guise to criticize effeminate men, on which irony, see Henderson 1989, 67.

77 Braund 1988, 151.

78 Cf. Keulen 2003 on the Socrates character in Apuleius’ Aristomenes’ tale (p. 374 above).

79 Alcibiades insists on his drunkenness as informing the character of his speech (*Symp.* 214c, 215a, 215d).

80 In the Socratic Aeschines’ *Alcibiades*, Socrates claims for himself an ecstatic, Bacchic love for Alcibiades through which he inspired him towards virtue (fr. 11). Plato’s Socrates likewise uses Dionysiac madness as an image of philosophical love at *Phdr.* 252d5–253b1, yet in the *Symposium* Alcibiades distorts the text he recalls, the imperfection marking his failure. So Reeve 2006, but contrast Ford 2017 for an interpretation of Alcibiades’ allusive practice as speaking to the value of verbal image-making and of a distinctive feature of Platonic discourse.

development and exaggeration of Alcibiades' construction of Socrates-as-satyr, itself an image of error, and a parody of true desire effected in literary terms through Socrates' translation into the genre of satyr drama.

5 Platonic Erotics in Roman Satire

Naevolus, the indiscriminate lover-for-hire, disappointed in his economic returns, is far removed from the ascetic Socrates of whom he is a caricature. Yet there is nothing easier to satirize than Socratic or Platonic desire, which appears in Platonic texts not only in its sublimated form as a desire for knowledge, but as a complex of mutual love which includes physical attraction. When Zeus and Hermes auction off philosophers in Lucian's sketch from the later second century CE, Socrates declares:

Παιδεραστής εἰμι καὶ σοφὸς τὰ ἐρωτικά.

I am lover of boys, and wise in matters of desire.

Lucian *Vit. Auct.* 15

It is a special expertise he claims in Plato's *Lysis* (204c, 206a–c) and *Symposium* (177d–e). Lucian's philosopher clarifies that his attraction is for the soul not the body, but the buyer finds this implausible. Socrates, as he appears in Plato's dialogues, was not blind to the physical attractions of young men. In the *Charmides* he suggests to Critias that they ask Charmides to strip and show his soul before looking at his body (154e), and when Charmides sits down next to Socrates the philosopher contains himself only with difficulty:

I thought how well Cydias understood the nature of love, when, in speaking of a fair youth, he warns someone “not to bring the fawn in the sight of the lion to be taken by him,” for I felt that I myself had been taken by some such creature.

Pl. *Chrm.* 155d–e

Of this ironic reversal of the expected roles of fawn and lion Tad Brennan writes, “Witty, indeed, and dishonest as well.”⁸¹ Socrates admits to Critias in this dialogue that almost all youths appear beautiful to him (*Chrm.* 154b), a

81 Brennan 2006, 294.

confession recalled by Lucilius, the father of Roman satire, at the end of the second century BCE:⁸²

sic Socrates in amore et in adolescentulis
 meliore paulo facie: sign<ab>at nihil
 quem amaret

So was Socrates in love and among young men who were even a bit good looking: he made no distinction whom he loved.

Lucil. fr. 836–38K

In the mid-first century CE Persius in *Satires* 4 and 5 presents contrasting images of Socrates and of erotic pedagogical relationships. The first is an ugly corruption of the Platonic ideal, the second a more wholesome presentation of the “Socratic embrace” (Pers. 5.37). Together they constitute a dialogue on philosophical erotics and on the legacy of the Platonic Socrates. Socrates appears as a speaker in Persius *Satires* 4, which reworks the ps-Platonic dialogue *Alcibiades*, and is the longest direct mimesis of the philosopher Socrates in Roman satire.

“Affairs of the state—in your hands?” (Imagine the bearded master saying this, the one removed by that fatal gulp of hemlock). “With what qualifications? Tell me that, ward of great Pericles.”

Pers. 4.1–3

The dialogue addresses the theme of vice beneath a beautiful exterior and draws for its Roman sources on two poems in the dialogic second book of Horace’s satires.⁸³ The primary target of the poem is Alcibiades, who with his shining skin prostitutes himself for the favors of the people (4.14–22).⁸⁴ Socrates himself does not emerge unscathed from an exchange of invective.⁸⁵ Although the assignment of lines to speakers is difficult beyond the opening twenty

82 On Lucilius’ critique of Socrates’ love for young men, indiscriminate and contrary to his own philosophical teachings, see Dutsch 2014, 21–2.

83 On this poem, see Hooley 1997, 122–53.

84 See also with Dessen 1968, 68, the comparison between Alcibiades and Baucis hawking aphrodisiac *ocima* to a slave.

85 Guilhamet 1985, 3–4, is in a very small minority in seeing Socrates presented here and elsewhere in Roman satire as “an object of reverence.”

two, it is hard to see anyone emerging from the abuse with much credit.⁸⁶ “No one attempts the descent into themselves, no one!” (*ut nemo in sese temptat descendere nemo*, Pers. 4.23), and not this Roman Socrates either. Even if we identify the sleek sunbather with Alcibiades, as many do not,⁸⁷ the violence of his interlocutor’s attack here has dismayed many readers. The poem seems to have veered in tone and content from its ps-Platonic origins. The satirist’s detailed interest in and condemnation of his target’s depilatory practices are a world away from Platonic distinctions between outward appearance and inner truth:

How disgusting! Weeding your prick and the recesses of your backside and exposing your withered old portals to the public ... Even if five wrestling trainers were to pull out these seedlings and make your boiled buttocks shake with their curving clippers, still that bracken of yours won’t be tamed by any plow.

Pers. 4.35–6

Such perverted and sterile agriculture, even if echoed in philosophical contexts, is here presented with a satirist’s hyper-realism.⁸⁸ No accusations of political prostitution in the *Alcibiades* or even the *Gorgias* come close to this. The *Alcibiades*’ Socrates may fear that his protégé will be corrupted (μή δημεραστής ἡμῖν γενόμενος διαφθαρῆς, 132a), but he doesn’t elaborate that corruption in metaphorical detail. The stigmatizing exposure to public view of this arrestingly effeminized sunbather is rather an act of masculine aggression characteristic of Roman satire. Jonathan Walters invokes the concept of the penetrating gaze to argue, with reference to Juvenal 2, “What the audience is being made to watch is an act of anal sexual penetration.”⁸⁹ He could as easily have been talking about Persius 4.

Arguments that Persius alludes to Catullus in this poem may not persuade all readers,⁹⁰ but it is hard to deny either an erotic dimension to a description of the sunbather weeding industriously away in an effort to make himself more plowable, or that this characterization deforms and inverts the Platonic

86 See Reckford’s (2009, 108) summary statement, “this is no longer just Socrates speaking to Alcibiades. It is an internalized Socratic/Stoic voice convicting us all, Persius included, of moral inadequacy.”

87 So Peterson 1972–73, 208; Bartsch 2015, 110–11.

88 Trapp 2007, 159, for the sterility of male homoerotic sex in Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 20.9 and *Pl. Leg.* 838e.

89 Walters 1998, 357.

90 Miller 1998, 269–271: Pers. 4.36 and Cat. 6.13; Pers. 4.41 and Cat. 11.24.

reciprocated desire that drives a transcendent quest for truth. For some critics the Socratic dialogue is simply abandoned or “breaks apart” in its transition from Plato’s Athens to Persius’ Rome.⁹¹ But Shadi Bartsch has argued that the “polluted eroticism” of the latter part of the poem is not just a jibe at “Greekling sexuality” in one of Roman satire’s characteristic tones, but a philosophically precise attack: “the whole sexual underpinning of the Platonic enterprise seems to have gone dangerously off track,”⁹² and this reveals a fundamental error in the Platonic philosophical system.

The corrupt Socrates of *Satires* 4 is a foil for the Stoic Cornutus, Persius’ teacher in the following satire. In this poem the satirist as a young man wandered the Subura from whose branching ways Cornutus rescued him:

me tibi supposui. teneros tu suscipis annos
Socratico, Cornute, sinu.

I put myself in your hands. You adopted my tender years in your Socratic embrace, Cornutus.

Pers. 5.36–7

This Roman Socrates seems in many ways to correct the shortcomings of his predecessor in *Satires* 4.⁹³ The agriculture of this poem is Stoically fruitful:

But it is your delight to grow pale over your texts at night, because, as cultivator of the young, you sow in their cleansed ears Cleanthes’ corn.

Pers. 5.62–4

Part of this corrective, Bartsch argues, depends on an extirpation of desire, or at least its replacement by the love between father and son.⁹⁴ It is certainly the case that a comedy of erotic subservience is set up in opposition to philosophical freedom in this satire—a freedom won, paradoxically, by Persius’ submission to Cornutus’ regulation. The *servitium amoris* from which Persius is saved is translated, via Horace’s *Satires* 2.3, from the opening scene of

91 Freudenberg 2001, 189. Dessen 1968, 62, argues for continuity. Cf. Connor 1988, 58–9; Hooley 1997, 129–30.

92 Bartsch 2015, 111.

93 Bartsch 2015, 117: “an answer to the failed educational program of satire 4.” On philosophical, Cynic, critique of Socrates as pederast, see Kindstrand 1976, 270–1.

94 Bartsch 2015, 118–21.

Terence's *Eunuchus*.⁹⁵ But it is far from clear that desire is so neatly banished from the philosophical relationship. After reading *Satires* 4 one approaches any reference to Socratic embraces with some suspicion. Kenneth Reckford comments, "The picture has been called homoerotic—a playful hint perhaps, but it should not distract us from the main point: that Persius found a second father in Cornutus."⁹⁶ Others have been more distracted by the possible senses in which Persius "put himself under Cornutus" (*me tibi supposui*, 5.36).⁹⁷

Dan Hooley's monograph-chapter on *Satires* 5 is entitled "A lecture in love's philosophy." Quite categorically, in his view, "the Stoic ephebe becomes, here, a Platonic *eromenos*."⁹⁸ He sees also a reflection in Persius' and Cornutus' sharing of their days and evenings together in philosophical study, of Catullus' and Licinius' reciting of verses to each other in Catullus 50.⁹⁹

tecum etenim longos memini consumere soles
et tecum primas epulis decerpere noctes.
unum opus et requiem partier disponimus ambo
atque verecunda laxamus seria mensa.
non equidem hoc dubites, amborum foedere certo
consentire dies et ab uno sidere duci.

Yes I remember spending long days with you and plucking the early evenings for feasting with you. Together we arrange our work and rest as one and relax our seriousness at a restrained table. I wouldn't want you to doubt that the days of both of us run in harmony with a fixed bond and are guided by one star.

Pers. 5.41–6

The differences between the restrained table of Persius' philosophical dinner and the wine and laughter of Catullus' poetic symposium are at least as apparent as the similarities. The intensity of the repeated *tecum*, the poetic

95 So Hooley 1997, 112–16, and Reckford 2009, 119–20, on Pers. 5.161–75, Hor. S. 2.3.259–71, and Ter. *Eu.* 46–63.

96 Reckford 2009, 116. On father figures (including patron and literary predecessor) in Horatian satire, see Schlegel 2000. For the relationship between Alcibiades and Socrates in Pers. 4 as representing the relationship between Persius and a Socratic Horace, see Keane 2006, 126. Such a line of argument would set Pers. 4 in closer conflict with the corrective of Pers. 5 and the satirist submitting to the guidance of his Stoic father.

97 On the name Cornutus ("Horny") see Henderson 1989, 64.

98 Hooley 1997, 82.

99 Hooley 1997, 82–4, on Pers. 5.41–2 and Cat. 50 and cf. also an elegiac formulation in Ov. *Tr.* 5.13.27–30. See Roman 2014, 56–9, on Cat. 50 as "an icon of neoteric poetics" (57).

flights¹⁰⁰ of “using up the long suns” and “plucking the early evenings” do not precede a sleepless night of unsatisfied longing:

sed toto indomitus furore lecto
versarer, cupiens videre lucem,
ut tecum loquerer simulque ut essem

But uncontrolled in my passion I tossed and turned all over the bed,
longing to see the dawn, so that I could talk to you and be with you.

Cat. 50.11–13

Yet the claim that Persius’ declaration of gratitude to Cornutus is “deepened by the language of love”¹⁰¹ is hard to deny altogether. The agriculture of this pedagogical poem is fruitful as that of its predecessor is not; while the sunbather of *Satires* 4 has his backside weeded, Cornutus’ young men have their ears purged. But erotic discourse is not extirpated: Cornutus becomes the teacher and father-figure of young men by sowing his Stoic seed in them. In an allusion that no one challenges, the conjunction of the stars that ties Persius to Cornutus is modeled on an astrological passage in Horace’s *Odes* 2.17 in which Horace binds himself to his patron Maecenas. Ellen Oliensis writes of that poem, “in *Odes* 2.17 Horace comes close to envisioning the kind of passionate symmetry imagined by Catullus and Propertius.”¹⁰² The quotation is taken from a chapter called “The Erotics of *Amicitia*,” in which Oliensis argues for a community of rhetoric between the poet-patron and poet-mistress relationships.

Satires 4 offers a dismaying caricature and critique of Platonic erotics. It implicates the philosopher, as well as his younger protégé, in errors sketched in the *Symposium* and *Alcibiades*, but which here find expression in the grosser physicality of satire. In *Satires* 5 Persius renounces the attractions of the Subura and a life of erotic subservience, for submission to Cornutus’ Stoic rule. But this poem does not reclaim the figure of Socrates for the Stoic tradition with a wholesale purge of Platonic erotics. Cornutus’ Stoic rule is itself eroticized in a sublimation characteristic of Platonic pedagogy¹⁰³ and also of the homosocial bonds of satire and Latin literary culture more generally. Erik Gunderson

100 No *verba togae* here (“words from daily life,” Pers. 5.14), of the kind approvingly observed in the satirist’s own speech.

101 Hooley 1997, 86.

102 Oliensis 1997, 167.

103 Cornutus is a Stoic teacher, but see Trapp 2007, 94, on Stoics and Platonists in superficial consensus on the value of pedagogical *erôs*.

writes, "Satire proposes that the homoerotic bonds of sublime literary pleasure felt between (male) author and (male) reader could serve as legitimate and legitimating substitutes for concretely sexual pleasures.... The cultured world of the literary elite is specifically the sublimated realm of legitimate pleasure."¹⁰⁴ It is a sublimation that can be challenged: homologous constructions have a tendency to converge and be confused.¹⁰⁵

The fourth satire ends with the bankruptcy of the precepts that Cerdo¹⁰⁶ has given:

Spit back what you're not; let Cerdo take back his gifts.
Live with yourself: learn the poverty of your furnishings.

Pers. 4.52–3

The fifth satire opens with a series of refusals by Persius of poetic clichés and pretensions, yet he calls for an epic voice to celebrate the philosophical triumph of Cornutus' teaching:¹⁰⁷

At this point I would dare demand a hundred-fold throat, to convey in a pure voice how deeply I have fixed you in the windings of my breast, and to have my words unseal all that lies unutterable, deep in my guts.

Pers. 5.26–9

The unutterable victory of Cornutus is more than a figure of speech in Persius, whose satire generally "is overloaded by the memories it activates, and short-circuited by its own ambiguity."¹⁰⁸ Here Persius would employ discredited words and discredited *topoi* to reveal an inner integrity. Reclaiming sublimity from epic bombast is one challenge. Finding the elusive purity of voice that would clearly demarcate this penetration of Persius' being from the unwelcome Socratic intrusions of the previous poem is another, and one that turns on the ambivalent reception not only of Socratic pedagogy, in its Platonic formulation, but of the sublimated erotics of Latin literary culture more broadly.

¹⁰⁴ Gunderson 2005, 233.

¹⁰⁵ So Skinner 1997, 144–7.

¹⁰⁶ See Reckford 2009, 203 n. 13, on Cerdo(n) as the namesake of the dildo-maker of Herod. 6.

¹⁰⁷ A hundred voices is an epic *topos*, while *non enarrabile* (Pers. 5.29) recalls *non enarrabile textum* and the military triumph at Actium on Aeneas' shield at Verg. *Aen.* 8.625. So Bartsch 2015, 122–3.

¹⁰⁸ Cucchiarelli 2005, 78.

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The Rhetoric of Socrates in Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*

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Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* (translated “The Orator’s Education” by Donald Russell),¹ a treatise in Latin from the late first century CE describing how orators should be educated, has not traditionally been regarded as a significant source for the reception of Socrates. Of the more than five hundred *testimonia* that Giannantoni collects in the first volume of his *Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquae* (SSR), the twelve² cited from Quintilian may seem to be of only minor importance, providing only corroboration of what other sources already report about the philosopher’s life, trial, and style of speaking.³ For example, Giannantoni does not print the text of Quintilian’s description of the Delphic oracle’s response to Chaerephon, appending only “cf. Quint. *Inst.* 5.11.42” to the text from Athenaeus’ account (5.218e–19a), one of very few such references without text in a volume whose overwhelming tendency is toward inclusiveness. Yet the attention Quintilian pays to Socrates warrants closer scrutiny. No friend to philosophy in general—one of Quintilian’s most memorable *sententiae* is “philosophy can be counterfeited; eloquence cannot” (*philosophia simulari potest; eloquentia non potest, Inst.* 12.3.12)—Quintilian nevertheless expresses consistent admiration for Socrates, as when he refers to the “incorruptible morality” (*invicta continentia, Inst.* 8.4.23) that Plato’s portrait of Socrates in the *Symposium* reveals, or calls Socrates “supremely wise” (*sapientissimus, 11.1.10*) in his handling of his trial. Quintilian also frequently invokes Socrates in support

1 Throughout this essay I have quoted Russell’s excellent translation of Quintilian for the Loeb Classical Library (2001). I have, however, taken the liberty of replacing Russell’s “cause” with “case” for Quintilian’s *causa* when it refers to a legal action undertaken by a pleader.

2 These *testimonia* are listed in SSR 3.211–12; but the index in Russell 2001 is more complete, including Quintilian’s reference to Socrates’ rebuff of Alcibiades (*Inst.* 8.4.23) and his explanation of Socrates’ livelihood (12.7.9), which I discuss in detail below.

3 Quintilian should, however, be recognized as a significant source for the reception of Plato: *Inst.* 2.15.27 is the earliest surviving direct evidence (there are references to earlier examples in later sources) for readers distinguishing dialogues in which Plato promotes his own views (Quintilian calls these *dogmatikoi*) from those in which he introduces arguments for evaluation and debate (Quintilian calls these *elegtikoi*). See Tarrant 2000, 78, and Reinhardt and Winterbottom 2006, 262.

of his own claims, either about what kind of an education orators should receive or about how practicing orators should make arguments (e.g., 1.10.13, 1.11.17, 5.7.28, 5.11.3, 9.2.46). In this, Quintilian's Socrates seems to resemble that of the broader Roman period, whom A.A. Long has described as "a rhetorical *topos* and exemplar, a constant subject for anecdotalists, a name on which to hang numerous moral apophthegms, and an author of fabricated letters and lectures" (2011, 356).⁴ That is, Socrates had become a source of authority to be invoked in support of any number of arguments, philosophical or otherwise: if Quintilian argues that the orator should study music because Socrates studied music (1.10.13), he is simply doing with Socrates what everyone else had been doing for a long time. In what follows, however, I will demonstrate the deeply problematic nature of Quintilian's appropriation of Socrates—both for its self-contradictions and for its egregious distortion of what must have been very familiar sources for the life of Socrates—and will argue that rather than understand these problems as evidence for extreme incompetence or extreme bias on Quintilian's part, we should see in them a meta-commentary on the very process of appropriation so prevalent not only in Quintilian's time, but, as Quintilian was well-aware, going back to the immediate aftermath of Socrates' death.

1 Arguing with Socrates

Socrates first appears in the *Institutio Oratoria* as evidence in an argument that orators should receive training in music: Quintilian cites a long list of famous mythological and historical figures who valued music, including Socrates, "who was not ashamed to learn to play the lyre in his old age" (1.10.13). A chapter later, Quintilian makes a similar argument that orators should study gymnastics, which he says can "ensure that the arms are held straight, the hands show no lack of education and no country-bred manners, the stance is proper, and there is no clumsiness in moving the feet" and he supports his claim with reference to authorities from the past: "'chironomy,' which, as its name tells us, is the 'law of gesture,' originated in heroic times and was approved by the greatest of the Greeks, including Socrates himself" (1.11.17). Socrates recurs as evidence a third time near the end of the treatise, when Quintilian is discussing the "duties" of the orator and considers whether orators should receive payment for representing litigants. Quintilian admits that "far the most honorable

4 See (in this volume) Beck for Plutarch's use of Socrates as a moral example, McConnell (esp. "Socrates and Tyranny," pp. 359–63) for Cicero's, and Holford-Stevens for Gellius'.

course, and the one which is most worthy of a liberal education and of the attitude of mind we expect, is not to sell one's labor or cheapen the prestige of such a beneficial service" by taking payment. But he also asserts that "if a man's domestic means require supplementing for some necessary purpose," it is appropriate to be paid, and to authorize this Quintilian cites "the precedent of all the philosophers ... money was collected to support Socrates, and Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus took fees from pupils" (12.7.8–9).

This last argument—that it is appropriate for the orator to take payment for his services because Socrates and several Stoics did—will strike those familiar with the evidence for the historical Socrates as strange. Socrates is represented in both Plato (*Ap.* 19d) and Xenophon (*Mem.* 1.2.7) as pointedly, even vehemently, refusing payment for his teaching. That Quintilian seems to make a distinction between the Stoics who, in his telling, actually took payment (*mercedes acceptare*) and Socrates, for whom "money was collected" (*conlatum sit*)⁵ only partly mitigates Quintilian's invocation of Socrates in support of something that the most prominent sources for the philosopher's life indicate he publically and repeatedly rejected. And in fact the Stoics that Quintilian cites do not support his argument any better than Socrates does, because, as Austin (1948, 116) remarks, "there seems no evidence elsewhere for the taking of fees by Zeno." Austin (citing a conversation with Kathleen Freeman) explains Quintilian's apparent error as a confusion between the Stoic Zeno and the Eleatic Zeno, who Plato says did take fees (*Alc.* 119a), but it is hard to see how Quintilian could have been confused about Socrates' view of such income given the frequency of Socrates' rejection of fees in the sources. Socrates is simply not a good example for the argument Quintilian is trying to make.

Quintilian's earlier arguments about music and gymnastics turn out to rest on similarly shaky ground if we investigate the sources on which they seem to be based. Quintilian is correct to say that Socrates, at least in Xenophon (*Symp.* 2.15–22), praises a dancer for his skill in coordinating the movements of all his body parts (2.16). This is similar to one of the reasons Quintilian gives for the orator to learn "chironomy": so that "the head and eyes do not move independently of the general inclination of the body" (1.11.17). Quintilian's use of that Greek term *cheironomia*, however, signals the tendentiousness of his interpretation of the passage. Quintilian cites etymology when he defines the term as *lex gestus*, "law of gesture, as its name tells us" (Greek *cheir* means "hand" and *nomos* means "law"). Gesture is certainly an important aspect of oratorical delivery, and indeed Quintilian devotes a significant portion of Book 11 to

5 This is in fact what Xen. *Oec.* 2.8 implies was Socrates' means of support.

it, but as Russell says (2001, 1.242), “Quintilian’s explanation [of *chironomia*] is hardly right”; the general usage of the term in Xenophon and elsewhere connects it to dancing, not gesture. Xenophon himself makes no connection to gesture either: his Socrates justifies his interest in dancing because it is better exercise than running or boxing, which tend to emphasize developing one part of the body at the expense of others (*Symp.* 2.17). As Colson observes (1924, 146), Xenophon actually distinguishes the very things that Quintilian seems to equate: Charmides jokes that he thought Socrates was crazy when he saw him dancing but when Socrates explained that he used dancing for exercise, he went home and engaged in “shadow boxing” (*echyronomoun*, *Symp.* 2.19) but not, he is careful to say, dancing. Ancient readers of Quintilian might not have been able to detect all the technicalities of these contradictions but, given the large number of later sources that draw on Xenophon as a source for Socrates’ interest in dancing as physical exercise (Plutarch, Lucian, Libanius, Diogenes Laertius, Athenaeus), Quintilian’s contention that Socrates in this passage is recommending dancing as a way of refining gestures would likely seem a fundamental modification of the general thrust of Xenophon’s well-known passage.⁶ Again Quintilian’s sources turn out not to support him quite as well as his confident presentation of them suggests.

Quintilian may seem to be on a stronger footing in claiming that the example of Socrates supports the argument that the orator should learn music: Plato’s Socrates describes his music lessons at *Euthydemus* 272c and, at the end of his life, wrote a hymn to Apollo in response to a recurring dream telling him to “make music” (*Phd.* 61a). But Quintilian also invokes Plato as someone who supports musical education, saying that “Plato believed music to be essential for his statesman, or the *politikos* as he calls him” (1.10.15), yet commentators have been unable to identify a place where Plato uses this adjective in discussing music; variation in the manuscripts of Quintilian here suggests that uncertainty over the reference is long-standing.⁷ Colson (1924, 127), regarding Quintilian’s remark in his next paragraph that “grammar and music were once united,” suggests that Quintilian may be confused by Plato using *mousikê* sometimes to describe a broad education in many different forms of arts and sometimes as a particular art form in its own right: for example, Plato’s discussion of “music” at *Republic* 2.376e and following, by which he means the

6 These later sources are discussed by Huss 1999, 383–385, who concludes that all of them (and most modern commentators) have missed the humor of the scene, and that the historical Socrates probably never even danced, let alone recommended it as training for speakers, as Quintilian claims.

7 MS B reads *vocat* (“the *politikos*, as they call him”) for A’s *vocat* (“... as [Plato] calls him”).

traditional *paideia* that included music but also all the other arts the muses governed, might be understood to imply that such an education is important for a citizen of his ideal state, but Quintilian is clearly referring to a much narrower understanding of the term. Quintilian also remarks that “the leaders of the sect which some regard as the strictest ... held the view that some of their Wise Men might give some attention to this subject” (1.10.15). Clearly the Stoics are meant, but, according to Colson (1924, 127), “no definite remark of this kind from any Stoic seems to have been preserved.” As with Quintilian’s arguments that orators should charge for their services and should learn gymnastics, his evidence for his claim that the orator should learn music seems flawed.

Commentators have sometimes attempted to address such contradictions between Quintilian and his sources by identifying other sources on which Quintilian might be drawing. For example, in the case of his claim that an orator should take fees for his services because Socrates received support from his students, the argument that most flagrantly contradicts sources for the life of Socrates that seem very likely to have been available to Quintilian’s readers, Austin (1948, 115–116) points out that there is a story, cited by Diogenes Laertius (2.20), that Socrates lent money (*tithenai*) and lived on the interest. The situation Diogenes describes is not really parallel to what Quintilian seems to be claiming about Socrates, but if Austin is right that Quintilian had this or some similar (lost) source in mind, then Quintilian has, in this case, preferred non-Platonic sources to Platonic ones, and in particular non-Platonic sources to what Plato has Socrates say in the *Apology*. That is, he seems to show an ability to distinguish Plato’s representation of Socrates from the historical figure. The idea that the *Apology* should be regarded as Plato’s creation rather than as a transcript of Socrates’ actual speech was certainly available to Quintilian, since Dionysius of Halicarnassus had already articulated it (*Dem.* 23 and *Rhet.* 8.8). Whether or not Quintilian was accustomed to reading Plato in this way, however, it would have been rhetorically useful for him to be able to point to Socrates as a model in this particular case: in all likelihood Quintilian himself made a living charging his students for instruction in oratory, a practice that, as I have argued elsewhere, creates a series of problems for Quintilian as someone who must attract customers using the same techniques he will teach them to use (Dozier 2018). Being able to cite someone as distinguished as Socrates as precedent would help his case. Given the weakness of Quintilian’s use of Socrates in the arguments detailed above, and given Quintilian’s need for Socrates as a precedent for taking fees, we may begin to wonder whether what we have here is a case not of Quintilian’s painstaking research into non-Platonic sources but of Quintilian saying whatever he needs to say, true or not, to support his claims.

2 An *Apology* for Quintilian

Investigating Quintilian's treatment of the *Apology* produces a further layer of contradiction and distortion in his treatment of Socrates: sometimes Quintilian, as above, treats the *Apology* as a literary creation of Plato, and sometimes as a record of the historical trial. It is true that much of what he says does not necessarily require the *Apology* to be a transcript: when, for example, Quintilian cites the charges against Socrates—"corrupting the youth and introducing new superstitions" (4.4.5)—as an example of the way charges can be combined, he might be quoting what Plato has Socrates say in the *Apology* (24b), but he might just as well be quoting a whole range of other sources such as Xenophon (*Mem.* 1.1.1) or Favorinus quoted in Diogenes Laertius (2.40) that attest this double charge.⁸ More often, however, and especially when more is at stake than a technical point about legal procedures, Quintilian blurs the line between reading the *Apology* as a historical and as a literary document. For example, in a passage where Quintilian argues (tendentiously but relying on a method of interpreting Plato used by his contemporaries) that Plato, contrary to impressions, actually believed that rhetoric was, or at least could be, a good and useful thing,⁹ the *Apology* is one of the pieces of evidence he cites: if he really did think rhetoric was bad, reasons Quintilian, "would Plato have written his Defense of Socrates and his encomium of the men who fell fighting for their country? These are certainly an orator's work" (2.15.28–9). On first glance this reference seems to acknowledge that the *Apology* is the work of Plato, and not of Socrates himself. But in the case of the second text cited, which must be the *Menexenus*, Quintilian shows a deep insensitivity to the interpretation of Plato, since that dialogue, most of which is devoted to an encomium of the dead, is almost certainly to be read as a parody of epideictic oratory and not a sincere attempt at it.¹⁰ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, whom I cited above as a critic who recognized that the *Apology* was not a transcript of Socrates' speech

8 Quintilian's *novas superstitiones* translates all three sources' *kaina daimonia*, "new divinities"; if OLD 1b s.v. is correct that the Latin term is "disparaging," Quintilian's translation conveys the accusers' hostility more than the Greek that the sources record.

9 Quintilian argues that Socrates' arguments against rhetoric in the *Gorgias* are tailored for Socrates' patently immoral interlocutors and should not be taken as Platonic dogma about rhetoric in general (2.15.26). An analysis of the reception of Plato in Quintilian parallel to this one of the reception of Socrates would begin with the many examples of apparently sloppy and disingenuous citation of sources in Quintilian's survey of definitions of rhetoric in *Inst.* 2.15 (catalogued by Reinhardt and Winterbottom 2006 ad loc.).

10 See, e.g., Coventry 1989, 2: the *Menexenus* is "a condemnation of the unphilosophical politics and rhetoric it represents."

at trial, does seem to have regarded the *Menexenus* as sincere (*Dem.* 23), but even if Quintilian also thought so, this dialogue is a strange choice for evidence that Plato admired rhetoric because in it Socrates claims that the oration he recounts was originally delivered by the courtesan Aspasia, and Quintilian had remarked only a few paragraphs before that courtesans (*meritricēs*) use persuasion but should not be considered proper practitioners of the type of rhetoric that Quintilian is teaching (2.15.11). The situation, however, is similar to that of the discussion whether teachers should receive fees, where Quintilian's self-interest seems to condition his interpretation of his sources. Here, it helps Quintilian's case for rhetoric immensely if he can cite, however tendentiously, Plato's approval of the discipline. Again we find the legacy of Socrates being shaped to suit a particular rhetorical purpose.

Quintilian's failure to recognize parody may not require an inability to distinguish the literary from the historical, but Quintilian goes on to refer to a story that the orator Lysias wrote and offered a defense speech for Socrates to use, but that the philosopher refused it as "dishonorable for him" (*inhonestam sibi*, 2.15.30).¹¹ This story of Socrates' refusing a speech that he regarded as being unsuitable for him is predicated on Plato's *Apology* being not only a more suitable speech but the actual speech that Socrates gave. The story is, however, almost certainly not historical: there is no reference to Lysias' speech contemporary to the trial (in Plato or elsewhere) and the pseudo-Lysian speech on behalf of Socrates that did circulate in antiquity seems to have been written in response to an accusation speech written some time after the trial (as Favorinus recognized, DL 2.39) by Polycrates as a paradoxical exercise.¹² Yet Quintilian also seems to treat Polycrates' exercise as a document from the historical trial of Socrates, saying that Polycrates "is said to have composed a speech which was delivered (*habita est*) against Socrates" (2.17.4). That Quintilian does not distinguish between these later compositions and the speeches actually given at the trial should make us doubt whether he is committed to doing so with the *Apology* itself.

In fact Quintilian does treat the *Apology* as a historical document when it suits his argumentative needs. Even more important to Quintilian than whether Plato approved of rhetoric or not is the question of the relationship of the expedient and the honorable in oratory, because Quintilian organizes his theory of rhetoric around the idea that anyone worthy of the title "orator" must also be a morally good man (1.pr.9, 2.15.33, 12.1.1). In arguing that such

11 For this story, and Polycrates' accusation speech, see Murphy (in this volume).

12 Lysias' speech is referred to in the scholia to Aelius Aristides (p. 320.4 and p. 420.32 Dindorf) as a speech *huper Socratous pros Polukratēn*.

an orator will, if forced, choose the honorable over the expedient, Quintilian again makes reference to the precedent of Socrates: “Everyone knows that nothing would have contributed more to Socrates’ acquittal than if he had used the ordinary forensic methods of defense, conciliated the judges by a humble tone, and taken trouble to refute the actual charge. But that would have been unbecoming for him (*minime decebat*); he therefore conducted his case as a man who intended to assess his own penalty as some great mark of distinction. That supremely wise man preferred to lose the rest of his life rather than his past” (11.1.9–10). Quintilian connects this passage to his earlier discussion of Plato’s attitude toward rhetoric by again referring to the speech Lysias supposedly offered Socrates (11.1.11). But whereas in the earlier passage it was unclear whether Quintilian regarded the *Apology* as the speech Socrates actually gave, here the details of his presentation leave little doubt that he did, in particular his reference to Socrates “assessing his own penalty as some great mark of distinction” (*honoribus summis*). This detail of Socrates’ trial can come only from Plato’s *Apology*, in which Socrates recommends that his penalty be that he be supported at the state’s expense in the Prytaneum (36d). That Xenophon’s account differs—according to him Socrates refused to name a punishment lest he seem to admit guilt (*Ap.* 1.23)—signals the likelihood that Socrates’ suggestion is a Platonic invention. Quintilian’s argument that the orator should follow Socrates’ example works only if the *Apology* represents Socrates’ actual speech.

When Quintilian wants to claim that Socrates’ example allows teachers to accept fees, he ignores Socrates’ protestations to the contrary in the *Apology*. But when he wants to claim that the orator should prioritize what is honorable over what is expedient, he holds up the *Apology* as a decisive case in point. In making this second argument, Quintilian is not even consistent with himself, as Arthur Walzer (2006) points out: in Book 3 Quintilian had dismissed this kind of position as an “idealistic view” (3.8.1). “Does Quintilian contradict himself?” asks Walzer. “Perhaps.” Walzer then proceeds to argue that this contradiction is in fact only apparent, because in the earlier passage Quintilian emphasizes the audience, and in the latter the orator himself (274–275). This demonstration of some version of internal consistency is one way of solving the problem of these contradictions; certainly it makes an advance over traditional approaches to Quintilian that treat the interpretive problems of his text as the product of his inferior intellect.¹³ A different interpretation, however, is possible, one

13 Kennedy’s influential assessment is that “[Quintilian] is a scholar and a teacher, a transmitter and a refiner, not a writer of the first rank” (1972.496–7). On Quintilian’s understanding of Platonic sources in particular, see Brinton 1983, 167, for whom Quintilian

that does not attempt to minimize the apparent contradictions of Quintilian's discussion but that also takes him seriously as a thinker and writer.

I have outlined such an approach in an article on another problematic passage in Quintilian, his discussion of the ideal orator in *Inst.* 12.1 (Dozier 2014, 82–6). This orator, argues Quintilian, will be both perfectly effective and perfectly moral because it is impossible, his argument goes, for a morally bad man to be persuasive. As if sensing the implausibility of his claim, Quintilian reviews and attempts to refute many possible objections (that given the same training a bad man will be as persuasive as the good; that the great orators of the past were in fact bad men; that the whole art of rhetoric is predicated on the power of figured speech to “triumph over truth itself,” 12.1.33), but in the end only weakens his case further by introducing patent contradiction and special pleading. As Walzer, in a paper published earlier than the one cited above, puts it, “[Quintilian] recommends his orator as a paragon of virtue and then countenances his lying to the judge to free a client that the orator knows to be guilty” (2003, 25). Walzer's solution in this case is similar to the one he applied to the contradiction between Quintilian's views of expedience: Walzer shows that Quintilian's obviously problematic argument is “coherent in its own terms” when understood as an adaptation of Roman Stoicism. But even Walzer has to admit the limits of his explanation: “to a philosopher or anyone else accustomed to theoretical coherence this marriage [between rhetorical theory and Stoicism] must look more like a shotgun affair than the marriage of true minds ... Quintilian cannot be credited with solving the ethical problems inherent in rhetoric.” (38). The solution I proposed in my article, by contrast, is to regard the implausibility of the passage as intentional, and therefore, since Quintilian singles out this passage as his original contribution to rhetorical theory (12.pr.4),¹⁴ integral to his purpose in composing the *Institutio Oratoria*. The contradictions and weaknesses of Quintilian's defense of the morally perfect orator are so egregious, and indeed, so obvious, to anyone who has been studying the techniques of argumentation that Quintilian himself has been teaching, that they must be understood not as an inferior thinker's attempt to defend an indefensible idea but as a provocation to readers to recognize his

is “not much of a philosopher,” and whose “jumbled” arguments can be made “more intelligible (and perhaps more plausible) by making reference to his more sophisticated philosophical ally [Plato].”

14 That Quintilian's “original” contribution has obvious precedents in Plato, Isocrates, and Cicero is one further clue that his arguments are not to be taken at face value. See Logie 2003 on the anachronism inherent in any assessment of Quintilian's “originality.”

fallacious argumentation for what it is.¹⁵ The purpose of the *Institutio Oratoria*, on my interpretation, is not (only) to teach readers how to use rhetoric, but how to recognize when rhetoric is being used and to resist it, including that which Quintilian himself uses throughout the treatise. This benefit of rhetorical training had already been recognized by Aristotle, who recommended training oneself to argue both sides of an issue not because both sides are equally just, “but in order that it may not escape our notice what the real state of the case is and that we ourselves may be able to refute if another person uses speech unjustly” (*Rh.* 1.1 1355a32–33). Unlike Aristotle, however, Quintilian provides his readers not only with the techniques they need to be able to recognize, but also with obviously “unjust” examples of those techniques being used. Quintilian’s distortions of the legacy of Socrates should be read in this light as well.

3 Quintilian, the Oracle, and “The Wisest of Men”

Something like what I have described as Quintilian’s intentional distortion of the legacy of Socrates has in fact been observed in our earliest record of that legacy: in the writings that began to circulate soon after the philosopher’s death. Plato’s dialogues are merely the most famous and best preserved of this body of literature about Socrates, already recognized by Aristotle as a distinctive genre (*Poet.* 1 1447a28–b13; *Rh.* 3.16 1417a18–21). The authors of these *logoi Sôkratikoî*, as they are known to scholars, did not simply seek to preserve the philosophy of a man who left no writing to posterity; rather, in these writings “each laid claim to, and quarreled over, the heritage of their bygone master, as well as faithfulness to his memory and his teachings” (Dorion 2011, 9). The fault lines in this contestation are particularly visible in places where the early accounts of Socrates’ life differ, such as the story of Chaerephon’s visit to the oracle at Delphi, which appears only in Plato’s and Xenophon’s versions of the *Apology*.¹⁶ On the basis of the differences between these two accounts of Socrates’ speech at trial, Paul Vander Waerdt has argued that Xenophon “read

15 Other readings that have detected ironic and even satirical dimensions in Quintilian’s treatise derive from a similar disparity between what Quintilian argues and what his audience would be expected to know: see for example Roche 2009 on Quintilian’s praise of the emperor Domitian’s military exploits that are known to have been unimpressive, or Penwill 2000 on his praise of Domitian’s poetic achievements which may well have been non-existent.

16 On Xenophon’s reception of Socrates, see Johnson (in this volume), including his attractive formulation that “Xenophon’s goal in his Socratic works resembles that of modern scholarship on Socrates to a surprising extent” (p. 158).

Plato's *Apology* as a literary fiction, consistently with the general characteristics of the *Sôkratikoï logoi*" (1993, 40), and that Xenophon's account, accordingly, is written to "correct or clarify central features of the Platonic account ... in accordance with [Xenophon's] own antecedent understanding of Socrates' moral philosophy and mission" (1).¹⁷ That is, Plato may well have invented the story of the oracle to make a philosophical point, and Xenophon then modified the story to suit his own purposes, just as Quintilian may at times seem to invent or distort evidence about Socrates to suit his.¹⁸

Quintilian, too, mentions the oracle concerning Socrates, and has shaped this story to suit the concept of Socrates that is rhetorically useful to him. When discussing the sources of external authority (*auctoritas*) to which an orator makes reference in supporting his case, Quintilian considers "the authority of the gods," which, he says, is "derived from oracles, like the one that said Socrates was the wisest of men" (5.11.42). This oracular pronouncement corresponds to neither Plato's nor Xenophon's accounts: Plato's Chaerephon asks the oracle whether anyone is "wiser" (*sôphoteros*) than Socrates, and the oracle responds that "no one is wiser" (*Ap.* 21a); in Xenophon's *Apology* Chaerephon's question is not given but the oracle's response is that "no one is more free (*eleutheriôteron*), more just (*dikaioteron*), or more prudent (*sôphronesteron*)" than Socrates (*Ap.* 14). Quintilian's version is perhaps closer to Plato's, with its reference to "wisdom" (in Quintilian's Latin, *sapientissimum*), and I will suggest below that the Platonic version should be considered more salient in this passage than Xenophon's, but in any case Quintilian's rewriting of the oracle's response would be obvious to anyone familiar with either Plato's or Xenophon's version. That Quintilian makes the oracle's response positive ("Socrates was the wisest") may be a product of his focus on oracles as evidence admissible in court; perhaps an unambiguous, positive oracle is more persuasive than a riddling, negative one. But in making this change to his sources Quintilian calls attention to a deeper problem with his invocation of Socrates: the oracle in question, at least as represented by Plato, can hardly be said to be the kind that Quintilian is looking for in this passage, which focuses on sources of authority such as "opinions which can be attributed to nations, peoples, wise men, distinguished citizens, or famous poets" that are "effective because they are not given to suit particular cases, but spoken or

17 Dorion 2012 goes so far as to classify Plato's account of the oracle as a Platonic "myth," tracing skepticism about its historicity back to Plutarch (*Adv. Col.* 1116e–f).

18 For Murphy (in this volume, p. 94), already in the fourth century BCE Socrates was "a largely *literary* identity, to which in turn were accreted new features as writers turned the figure of Socrates to their own purposes."

given by minds free of prejudice and favor" (5.11.36–7). That is, these opinions or citations are useful to the orator because audiences will assume they can trust them since they have not been crafted by the orator himself. Nothing could be farther, however, from the way that the Socrates of Plato's *Apology*, at least, says he responded when he heard the oracle about himself: so far from taking it at face value he disbelieved it and set about testing his wisdom against that of many other groups of people with so much persistence that he refers to his investigation as "Heracleian Labors" (*Ap.* 22a) and admits that at every stage he made enemies of those he questioned (23a). Plato's Socrates introduced the oracle into his speech as something to be doubted, investigated, and tested, not as something to be trusted unreflectively. It is a profound distortion of Plato's text for Quintilian to claim it as an example of anything else.

So profound, in fact, that like the other distortions I have catalogued, Quintilian must have expected his readers to recognize it. And in fact the other types of external authority that Quintilian cites in this passage reflect the same attempt to choose examples that will provoke disbelief rather than assent. Quintilian recommends citing the poets whenever they are applicable to the case being argued, but his example is "the way in which the Megarians were defeated by the Athenians in their dispute over Salamis by means of a line of Homer (not in fact found in every edition) which showed that Ajax had united his fleet with the Athenians" (5.11.39–40). The reference is to the Homeric catalogue of ships, where Ajax is said to have come from Salamis and joined with the Athenians (*Il.* 2.557–8), lines which Quintilian himself judges to be of doubtful authenticity and which several ancient sources (going back to Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*, 1.15 1375b29) indicated were interpolated by Athenians precisely for the purpose of justifying their claim to the island. A widely-known forgery hardly seems the best possible example of the effectiveness of citations from poets. Similarly Quintilian's example of the usefulness of "opinions of nations" is, "when speaking about the misfortunes of life," to refer to "those who greet newborn babies with tears and the dead with rejoicing" (5.11.38). Herodotus (5.4) describes this practice, so perhaps such a tribe really existed, but it is hard to imagine that such a perverse idea would console many Romans who were mourning their own dead. Such, too, is a further contradiction inherent in making Socrates' use of the oracle an example for the way rhetoric should be used: Socrates' speech led to his death, making it a strange choice of model for the aspiring orator to imitate, at least if he aspires to survive his career. This problem is even more acute in the passage where Quintilian holds up Socrates as a model of a speaker giving the honorable due priority over the expedient (11.1.9–10): if anything, the model of Socrates would seem to argue against pursuing the honorable, at least from the point of view of any

young student of rhetoric. Quintilian piles absurdities on absurdities: an oracle that no one believed, least of all the person it described, is supposed to prove the persuasiveness of oracles; a man who intentionally provoked a jury to condemn him to death is held up as an oratorical model. This cannot just be a case of an unscrupulous dissembler distorting evidence to serve his own ends, because Quintilian has made so little effort to conceal what he has done. He must intend for us to notice.

4 A Socratic Reading of Quintilian and a Quintilianic Reading of Socrates

I suggested above that Quintilian's purpose throughout the *Institutio Oratoria* is to provide his reader opportunities to recognize the coercive power of rhetoric. Anyone with even a passing familiarity with the Platonic accounts of Socrates will be able to see, in Quintilian's (mis)appropriation of Socrates, a speaker attempting to bolster his authority by reference to widely-admired but only marginally relevant figures from the past. I am confident that similar distortions along these lines could be detected in Quintilian's references to other such figures, such as Vergil or Cicero.¹⁹ But Socrates provides a particularly significant example because he was known in antiquity as the model of inductive argumentation (Arist. *Metaph.* M.4 1078b24–9); indeed, Quintilian begins his discussion of this form of argument with a reference to Socrates as someone who “made great use” of it (*plurimum est Socrates usus*, 5.11.3). This gives special point to Quintilian's misuse of Socrates because he becomes, in Quintilian's hands, a term in the very form of argumentation for which he himself was famous. We might also observe that Socrates himself, at least as represented by the Socratics, provides a model of the kind of skepticism that, on my reading, Quintilian wants his readers to apply to his own text. Socrates refused to trust the oracle that Chaerephon received; similarly Quintilian does not want his readers to trust even his own account of rhetoric. When he describes, at the end of the *Institutio*, aspiring orators seeking advice from a retired rhetorician “as if from an oracle” (12.11.5), he no more intends us to take this pompous and self-serving declaration seriously (Quintilian himself had announced his retirement at the beginning of the *Institutio*, making himself into the oracle he celebrates) than he does his flimsy and unpersuasive defense of the morality of the orator who defends men guilty of murder. By inviting us

19 I have delivered a paper along these lines about Quintilian's quotations from Vergil that I hope to publish in the future.

to see through his representation of Socrates Quintilian invites us to perform a very Socratic skepticism.

Quintilian does intend, however, for us also to turn that skepticism onto the Platonic and Xenophontic representations of Socrates against which we are measuring his own. Just as the early Socratics competed over who would define the legacy of their teacher, Quintilian lived in an age in which the boundaries and purview of different forms of knowledge were subject to intense disciplinary contestation, as I have argued in a forthcoming article in which I read the *Institutio Oratoria* as, in part, a response to the claims made for poetry over rhetorical theory in Horace's *Ars Poetica* (Dozier forthcoming). Some might assert the primacy of their forms of knowledge by creating and policing disciplinary boundaries; Quintilian, as a partisan of rhetoric, aims to demonstrate that the very act of establishing and policing such boundaries requires a deployment of the expertise he is teaching. Socrates provides a convenient and familiar figure with which to demonstrate the methods by which partisans of one philosophical cause or another appropriate him to their side: picking and choosing what aspects of the legacy of Socrates to emphasize, modifying existing accounts (or even inventing new ones) in order to make philosophical points, in short, constructing the Socrates they need in order to authorize their philosophical project, the very methods that Vander Waerdt recognizes that Xenophon, and by extension Plato and the other less-well preserved Socratics, employed.

These methods are of interest to Quintilian, the professor of rhetoric, because they are all fundamentally rhetorical in nature. Other ancient critics had analyzed the rhetoric of early representations of Socrates, as we can see, for example, in Dionysius of Halicarnassus' argument that Plato's *Apology* was not only a defense speech but an "attack (*kathêgoria*) on the Athenians," an "Encomium of Socrates," and a "statement of what the philosopher ought to be" (*paraggelma opoion einai dei ton philosophon*; *Rhet.* 8.8). But Quintilian's analysis of representations of Socrates goes deeper than mere classification: Quintilian's transparently distorted and distorting treatment of Socrates allows his readers to observe in his own appropriation of one of the most appropriated figures in antiquity how this process of appropriation is carried out, whether in the hands of Quintilian himself, or Plato, or anyone else who exerted any artistry in constructing a Socrates that was rhetorically or ideologically useful to themselves.²⁰ And if Quintilian focuses primarily on Platonic representations of Socrates it is not only because they were the most

20 Wilson 2007 discusses examples of post-Classical representations of Socrates (especially his death), including some that are skeptical of his greatness.

familiar, but because he recognized in Plato's portrait of Socrates a kind of parallel to his own portrait of the ideal orator, who he says is not "an orator who really exists or has existed," but "the ideal orator who has no imperfections at all" (1.10.4).²¹ The superhuman Socrates found in Plato's dialogues (Griswold 2002, 85) no more "really exists or has existed" than does, or has, Quintilian's ideal orator. Both writers represent the ideal practitioners of their disciplines; whether Plato intends for his representation to crumble under scrutiny, as I have argued Quintilian does, I leave to specialists to determine. But for the rhetorician Quintilian, to pull back the veil on the rhetorical dimension of Plato's or any other representations of Socrates is to demonstrate that Socrates, at least the figure that is available to us in our sources, should be recognized, first and foremost, not as a philosopher but as a construct of rhetoric.

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21 Brinton 1983 catalogues the Platonic background to Quintilian's ideal orator. Quintilian's interest in Socrates may be similar to that which Porter 2006, 416, argues attracted Nietzsche to him: "Nietzsche was drawn to the very *source* of the enigma of Socrates—not to Socrates as a clichéd superficiality ... but to Socrates as a difficult because unlocatable identity, a personality that refuses identification."

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Socrates in Aulus Gellius

Leofranc Holford-Strevens

The Roman polymath Aulus Gellius, who seems to have been born in the 120s AD and died before 192, wrote a miscellany in twenty books, of which the eighth is lost apart from summaries of its contents (which as we shall see included one concerning Socrates), and which he entitled *Noctes Atticae* because he had begun collecting material for it during long winter's nights at Athens, where he went, probably in 147, like many other young Romans to complete his studies. There he became a pupil and an intimate of the Platonist L. Calvenus Taurus from Beirut, was a guest of the wealthy and eloquent Herodes Atticus, and heard the Cynic philosopher Peregrinus, later called Proteus, admiring both the last two despite their mutual detestation, of which he never speaks.

The culture of Gellius' day (Holford-Strevens 2012) was in both the Greek- and the Latin-speaking portions of the Empire marked in many, though not all, respects by a reversion to the past: Greeks attempted with varying success to write and declaim in classical Attic; Latin literature, in particular, turned as sharply against its first-century self as English literature of the nineteenth century against that of the eighteenth, but also displayed an interest in the pre-Ciceronian writers long scorned at least in the capital, not as models to be imitated wholesale but as resources for renewing the literary language (Marache 1952). In Gellius, though not in the age's leading orator, Fronto, nor its most creative writer of Latin, Apuleius, this is combined with a rejection of certain recent usages and with the traditional belief that ancient Romans had been models of virtue.

So far as philosophy is concerned, in ethics it was fashionable to talk like a Stoic, even if it took a Marcus Aurelius to live like one, and Fronto found the school's teachings inhuman and the style of its writings jejune; however, the doctrine of eliminating all passions was contentious, as appears from more than one chapter of Gellius, who was not a philosopher, but took an interest in philosophy and philosophers that goes beyond his professed concern with ethics (Holford-Strevens 2005, 260–89). Yet his own teachers were not Stoics, but the Academic sceptic Favorinus and the Platonist Taurus.

Of the just under 400 chapters in his work, the name *Socrates* and the derived adjective *Socraticus* appear in 17; for comparison, the polymath Favorinus is mentioned in 33 chapters (though not all are of philosophical content even

when he is called *Fauorinus philosophus*), Plato in 30 (besides one reference to the *disciplina Platonica*), Aristotle in 24, his more strictly philosophical teacher Taurus in 15, Plutarch in 12, Epicurus in 9, Theophrastus in 8, Pythagoras and Pythagoreans in 8, Chrysippus in 6.

1 Life and Teaching

1.1 *Material from Plato*

In general, Gellius assigns the sayings of the Platonic Socrates simply to Plato, whom he manifestly admires and frequently cites, though not with full comprehension (Gersh 1986, 1.207–13; Tarrant 1996; Holford-Strevens 2005, 265–9). When, however, in 12.9.6 he parallels a sentiment expressed by a Roman statesman in a passage cited for an unusual word-use with the precept that it is worse to do wrong than to be wronged, he attributes it not to Plato but directly to Socrates. He quotes it in words taken from *Gorgias* 474c, κακίον εἶναι τὸ ἀδικεῖν ἢ τὸ ἀδικεῖσθαι, which taken by themselves seem to express that meaning, but read in context bear a different one: Socrates is asking Polus which he thinks worse, doing wrong or being wronged. Although the conjunction ἢ may mean “than” as well as “or,” when elsewhere in the dialogue Socrates does state the precept, he uses the normal genitive of comparison, τοῦ ἀδικεῖσθαι; at first sight one might suspect a second-hand quotation, but since all quotations of or allusions to this precept that we know also exhibit the genitive, it is more probable that Gellius, who is not immune to slips in Greek and who in his own language would have had to use a conjunction (saying, for example, *peius esse iniuriam facere quam ferre*), had copied or remembered the words out of context.

In any case, he has clearly read this dialogue for himself, together with Taurus’ commentary. At 7.14.5–9 he contrasts the three grounds for punishment that Taurus acknowledged in the first book of his commentary (therefore on the earlier discussion of the topic with Polus) with the two grounds stated in the dialogue itself at 525c—attributing them to Plato, not to Socrates, since his attention is focused on the Platonic text—and notes that whereas exponents of the three grounds call upholding the victim’s dignity and standing τιμωρία (§3), Plato uses the word for punishment in general (§8). This is exactly the kind of observation one would expect of the grammarian that Gellius is at heart; the philosophical reader will note rather that he leaves open the question whether Plato omitted the victim’s standing as unimportant or rather (*an magis*) as irrelevant to a treatment of punishment after death (§9). Since Taurus’ discussion appeared in the first book of his commentary (§5), it must

have been instigated by the debate with Polus on the benefit of correction, in which no other ground is considered; having already said all he wished to say there, he made no comment on the later passage, facing Gellius with a problem he does not attempt to solve by reference to other dialogues; it is for readers to take the matter further if they so wish.

Gorgias returns in the two extracts from Callicles' tirade against philosophy (addressed of course to Socrates) transcribed in 10.22, which despite the speaker's ethical deficiency are in Gellius' opinion a warning "lest we too should earn such rebukes and through inert and empty idleness lay false claim to the study and pursuit of philosophy" (§2) and valid criticism by Plato of such philosophy as lacks a moral purpose and does not engage in life:

This is what Plato pronounced, in a scoundrel's character as I said, but warranted by general awareness and understanding, and with a truth that cannot be concealed (*set cum sensus tamen intellegentiaeque communis fide et cum quadam indissimulabili ueritate*), not of course about that philosophy which is the training in all virtues, which excels in both public and private duties, and if nothing prevents it (*si nihil prohibeat*) governs cities and the state with constancy, courage, and skill, but about that futile and childish practicing of clever arguments which contributes nothing to protecting or ordering life (*de ista futtili atque puerili meditatione argutiarum nihil ad uitam neque tuendam neque ordinandam promouente*), in which persons of that class with too much time on their hands grow old (*id genus homines consenescent male feriat*), whom ordinary people take to be philosophers, and he did too in whose character this speech was made.

Gell. 10.22.24

Gellius presents this judgment as his own; certainly it resembles the preference for experience in life over mere classroom-learning expressed in 13.8.2. Yet it need not be original with him, for Taurus could have made use of the bad man's home truths to lambast the heirs of Euthydemus and Dionysiodorus (Tarrant 1996, 178–84), and if Hortensius' harangue against philosophy, in Cicero's lost dialogue of that name, combining Dicaearchus' advocacy of the active life with a tendentious use of *Gorgias* by Antiochus of Ascalon, finds an echo at Themistius, *Or.* 34.12 (Grilli 1971, 68–70; 1990, 63–5), Taurus too could have drawn on this tradition, and is all the likelier to have done so, as Tarrant observes, in view of the "we" in §2 (which may be contrasted with the indefinite "you" of 16.8.16–17, on the danger of excessive engagement with logic). One might even, in view of Taurus' acquaintance with Stoic teachings (*NA* 9.5.8, 12.5; Lakmann

1995, 225–226), speculate that *si nihil prohibeat*, reproducing the doctrine that the sage will take part in political life if nothing prevents him (Sen. *De otio* 3.2; DL 7.121; cf. Stob. 2.111.5–9), was also taken from his commentary rather than from Gellius' own Stoic reading.

At 19.9.9 Antonius Julianus, provoked at a party to defend the quality of Latin love-poetry against the sneers of Greek fellow-guests, before reciting some specimens begs leave to cover his head with his cloak, "as they say Socrates did in an insufficiently chaste discourse (*in quadam parum pudica oratione*)." The allusion is to *Phaedrus* 237a, the discourse being Socrates' argument for yielding to the nonlover rather than to the lover. The vagueness of Julianus' expression, like the gesture, is intended to distance the speaker from a genre that, however much relished, was not entirely respectable in the ancient world; but it also recalls the sympotic singer.

It is also from Plato's dialogues that Gellius derives the pattern for two chapters in which pretentious ignorance is exposed by questioning. The chapter-summary of 4.1 describes it as a dialogue, "conducted on the Socratic plan" (*factus in Socraticum modum*), between the Academic philosopher Favorinus of Arelate and a boastful grammarian. Bored by a grammarian's disquisition on the declension of *penus* ("store"), Favorinus asks for the word's meaning, lest he should misuse it (here we may observe a perfect example of Socratic *eirôneia*); the grammarian contemptuously rattles off a list of things that constitute *penus* but is baffled by the request for a definition by genus and differentia, not even understanding what they are. In 18.4 the grammarian Sulpicius Apollinaris similarly puts down a self-styled expert on Sallust "with the kind of very amusing dissimulation which Socrates used on the sophists" (§1, *genere illo facetissimae dissimulationis qua Socrates ad sophistas utebatur*): saying that the day before he had been unable to explain the difference between two words in a passage from Sallust's *Histories*, he asks the grammarian to do so. The other again gives a scornful answer, saying that of course they mean the same thing, and promptly makes to walk away; when pressed to stay and explain, he claims to be busy and leaves. (Gellius himself practices *eirôneia* on a grammarian in 6.17, but does not invoke Socrates; for Plato as his literary model see Garcea 1999.)

1.2 *Matter from Other Sources*

Plato, however, is not Gellius' only resource for Socrates' life and conduct: he also takes material from the biographical tradition. At *NA* 14.6.5 he relates that, returning a book of miscellaneous information, not least on the Homeric poems, that he did not find useful for his work, he professed to be concerned above all with one Homeric verse that Socrates claimed to value

above everything: “what ill or good hath in thy halls been wrought” (ὅττι τοι ἐν μεγάροισι κακὸν τ’ ἀγαθὸν τε τέτυκται, *Od.* 4.392). In its original context, it means no more than that Proteus will, upon request, tell Menelaus what has been happening at home while he was away; but Philo Judaeus already knew it in the context of self-examination (*On the Migration of Abraham* 195, *On Dreams* 1.57), and, variously ascribed to Socrates, Antisthenes, and Diogenes, it was used as by Gellius to decry all learning not directed towards one’s moral improvement.

This is a frequent theme with him, often combined with attacks on false philosophers whose lives belie their teachings, and an exaltation of antique Roman virtue against Greek intellectualism. Humbugs there had always been, but they particularly abounded in Gellius’ day, seeking to exploit Marcus Aurelius’ addiction to philosophy (Cass. Dio 71.35.2). In 9.2 the unkempt beggar who accosts Herodes Atticus claims to be a philosopher, though really nothing of the kind; in 13.8.4–5 Gellius records that a philosopher friend called Macedo had wished all temple doors to be inscribed with the verse from Pacuvius, “I hate the man of dastard deed and philosophic speech” (fr. 4 Schierl), since nothing could be unworthier or more intolerable than that lazy and idle persons with beard and cloak should turn philosophy into verbal artifice and deliver eloquent denunciations of vice while themselves soaked in vices through the skin (*intercutibus ipsi vitiis madentes*). This last phrase may have been inspired by Cato the Elder, one of the ancient Romans who (along with Aesop) is said by Gellius to match or surpass Greek philosophers in moral guidance (Holford-Strevens 2005, 260).

None of these thoughts is original; Seneca can denounce idle learning (*Epistulae morales* 88), demand that life match words (108.36), and warn against the charm of sophisms (111.5). Yet, just as one wonders how Epistle 88 could have been written by the author of the *Naturales quaestiones*, so one may wonder why Gellius in 14.6, after listing various fatuous questions allegedly considered in the proffered miscellany, when he comes in §4 to “what cities and regions have had changes to their names” lists ten examples, and in the chapter-summary writes, “What kind of things they are that have the appearance of learning, but afford neither delight nor utility; and there too on the names of particular places and regions that have been changed.” However, as Gellius observes at 14.3.6–7, if we believe Plato against Xenophon, Socrates had broader intellectual interests than ethics alone, and so has he; even his understanding of utility is not purely ethical (Beall 2004; Morgan 2004; Holford-Strevens 2005, 42–3). Nevertheless, when Socrates is cited as an authority, the context is always ethical; another ethical saying, that one should eat to live not live to eat, already found in a Latin rhetorical treatise of the

first century BC (*Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.39) but ascribed to Socrates from Musonius Rufus onwards (p. 102, ll. 9–11 Hense)—albeit once to Diogenes—is cited as his at 19.2.7.

Another biographical tradition, that of Euripides, provides the report at 15.20.4 that the poet studied natural philosophy with Anaxagoras, rhetoric with Prodicus, and moral philosophy with Socrates (so too the *Suda*, ε 3695; cf. *Life* 4); the implication is that he enjoyed the best available education, but nothing is said of any influence that Socrates might have had on his plays such as that detected by Satyrus in his life of the poet (fr. 39 11 Arrighetti), let alone the allegations in Greek comedy of co-authorship cited at *Life* 5 and Diogenes Laertius 2.18. On the other hand, Gellius' report that the poet had two wives simultaneously, offered as a possible explanation of his alleged misogyny, may be an assimilation to a similar report about the philosopher supposedly derived from Aristotle (fr. 93 Rose)—though not found in Gellius, who knows only Xanthippe—for according to the Greek biographers Euripides divorced one wife for unchastity and then married another (*Life* 24, cf. *Suda* loc. cit.).

The chronographical chapter 17.21, explicitly derived from Varro and Nepos but not to the exclusion of other authors, records Socrates as a younger contemporary of Sophocles, Euripides, Hippocrates, and Democritus (§18). Of course it is his absence that would have been remarkable, but it is interesting that Gellius should qualify him as Athenian, *Socrates Atheniensis*, whereas none of the other four is given an ethnic; since he was hardly less obscure than the others, this appears to be a mark of especial honor. In the next section we are told successively that the Thirty Tyrants were given charge of Athens by Sparta, that Dionysius the Elder seized power at Syracuse, and that “a few years later Socrates was condemned to death at Athens and executed in prison by poison.” No explanation or comment is given; in a catalogue of briefly stated facts neither was needed, but in reversing the sequence of Dionysius, whose coup took place in 405 BC, and the Thirty, who were put in power a year later, Gellius has precluded any suggestion that Socrates might have been punished for the political activities of Critias and Charmides. In Aeschines' speech against Timarchus, cited at *Noctes Atticae* 1.5.1 and in 18.3, he could find at §173 the assertion that “Socrates the sophist” had been executed for educating Critias; even his contemporary Aelius Aristides, in polemic against Plato, could class Socrates with the sophists (Ὑπὲρ τῶν τεττάρων 16)—a term that for him is not pejorative—and in view of Alcibiades' and Critias' crimes refuse to acquit him of corrupting youth so long as Plato blamed Athenian leaders for the people's errors (Ὑπὲρ τῆς ῥητορικῆς 335). Nevertheless, in view of other disruptions to chronological sequence in the chapter, we cannot be sure that Gellius knew what he was doing.

In 2.1 Socrates is said to have often stood stock-still in thought, immobile from one sunrise to the next, and to have been so temperate in his habits that he was virtually never ill even during the Great Plague. The source of the first statement is Favorinus, who wrote a work of miscellaneous learning and also a collection of memorabilia concerning philosophers; if correctly reported, he has combined a habit of pausing for thought recorded at *Symposium* 175b1–2 with the single incident during the Poteidaia campaign described by Alcibiades in the same dialogue at 220c3–d4. Favorinus is also the probable source of the second statement, which reappears in Diogenes Laertius 2.25 and Aelian *Varia Historia* 13.27; he may have supplied other stories too, but specific attributions are speculative and in any case Gellius has made them his own.

To Favorinus alone, however, belongs the refutation of astrology in 14.1, in which the question is asked (§29) why appropriate configurations of the stars should not produce numerous Socrateses, Antistheneses, and Platos with all their characteristics at the same time. A philosopher would naturally choose philosophers as his exemplary great men, but Gellius has not substituted Roman men of achievement as at §24 he has substituted a Roman battle for Favorinus' presumed Greek example.

1.3 *Anecdotes about Xanthippe*

Socrates' patience under abuse from his shrewish wife is the subject of two chapters; neither anecdote is found elsewhere, though both seem to be variants of stories told by other authors. In 1.17 Xanthippe is the termagant whom Alcibiades is astonished that Socrates does not divorce; the philosopher explains that by enduring her tantrums at home he learns the better to bear ill-treatment out of doors, which puts Gellius in mind of Varro's advice (complete with word-play) on dealing with a wife's faults; Diogenes Laertius 2.36 relates that when Alcibiades described Xanthippe as unendurable, Socrates replied that he had got used to her just as if he were hearing a windlass all the time. Of the other chapter, 8.11, only the summary survives: "How wittily Socrates answered Xanthippe when she asked that during the Dionysia [a major Athenian festival] they might spend more on dinner." Unfortunately, since this story appears nowhere else, we do not know what his witty answer was; however, the anecdote bears a distant relation to one in Diogenes Laertius 2.34, that when Xanthippe was embarrassed at the modesty of the fare available to serve rich dinner-guests, Socrates bade her not to worry, since if the guests were moderate they would accept what they were given and if not they would be none of their concern (a parallel already noted by Falster 1721, 61–2), and one in Aelian *Varia Historia* 9.29, that when during a festival Alcibiades ostentatiously sent Socrates numerous gifts that

Xanthippe urged him to accept, he replied, "Let us match his ostentation by refusing them."

2 Socratics

In 7.10 Gellius relays another story attested nowhere else (though again not without parallels: Lakmann 1995, 64), which he claims that Taurus told in order to inspire his pupils: Socrates' pupil Euclides of Megara evaded the closure of Athenian borders to Megarians by walking all the way from Megara to Athens at nightfall, dressed in women's clothes, and back again at dawn. Taurus contrasts this devotion to philosophical study with the arrogance of modern students, who expect philosophers to wait on them, even as in 1.9 he contrasts the disciplined pupils of Pythagoras with the ignoramuses of his own day who presume to dictate the syllabus.

In this chapter, Socrates, though the cause of the action, is not the focus of the narrative; neither is he at 2.18.1–5, on the transition of Phaedo from prostituted slave to philosopher. To be sure in §4 it is Socrates who persuades Cebes to buy and educate him, with the result that in §5 he writes Socratic dialogues, but the spotlight remains on Phaedo, and the chapter as a whole is concerned with slave-philosophers, who interested Gellius rather for his love of unusual facts than for any subversive views on slavery, and whom he may well have found already collected in a work on educated slaves by the Hadrianic grammarian Hermippus. According to Diogenes Laertius (2.31, 105), other writers had identified the purchaser as Crito or Alcibiades; Cebes was no doubt suggested by his prominence in Plato's *Phaedo* (that he had money is evident from *Crito* 45b).

Socrates' presence is also secondary in 14.3, on the quarrel between Plato and Xenophon inferred from their writings that is also mentioned by Diogenes Laertius (2.57, 3.34) and Athenaeus (11.504e–505b); as already noted, one of the three grounds given for that inference (and mentioned by neither of the others) is Xenophon's denial to Socrates of those intellectual interests with which he is credited by Plato. Gellius is reluctant to believe in such a quarrel between those "excellent and most grave men," seeing the notion as a result of contention between their respective supporters that created the appearance of contention between "the two luminaries of Socratic delightfulness" (*Socraticae amoenitatis duo lumina*, §11). That was how the bad blood between his beloved teacher Favorinus and Antonius Polemo was said to have originated (Philostr. VS 490); Gellius mentions neither Polemo nor the quarrel, though it may underlie Favorinus' remark in 19.3 that vicious abuse is preferable to faint

praise, since the former is discounted as the words of an enemy, the latter taken at face value as the words of a friend who can find nothing more to say in one's favor.

In no other chapter is any of Socrates' pupils other than Plato cited as a witness to Socrates' words and actions; of the rest, only Cebes is mentioned as a writer on that topic—not even Aeschines of Sphettus appears, though others deemed him to replicate Socrates' manner (DL 2.61) and whose interest for Gellius' contemporaries is attested by references and papyri. Moreover, 14.3 is also the only chapter in which Xenophon appears, though when in 12.1 Favorinus, informed that a pupil's wife has been delivered of a son, takes all those with him along to pay his respects, one will recall that according to *Memorabilia* 3.11 Socrates' followers were in attendance when he visited the beautiful hetaera Theodote.

With regard to Plato and Xenophon, Socrates may be regarded as a character-witness, the implication being that his pupils could not have lowered themselves to such jealousy; nevertheless, Plato and Xenophon appear in their own right, as do two other pupils whose relation to him serves both as identification and as source of moral authority: in 9.5.3 the opinion of Antisthenes Socraticus, "I had rather go mad than have pleasure," is cited along with those of other philosophers; and in 19.1.10 a Stoic philosopher, who had turned pale during a storm at sea, when asked why by a rich fellow passenger who had not, quotes the riposte to a similar coxcomb of "the famous pupil Aristippus" (*Aristippus ille discipulus*), where the name of his teacher Socrates needs to be supplied: "You did not fear for the life of a worthless ne'er-do-well; I feared for that of Aristippus."

3 Absences

At no point does Gellius mention the "something δαιμόνιον" ("divine," but also "uncanny"), at times called a sign or a voice, that sometimes came to Socrates; not even in 14.3, where he might have noted the difference between Plato's account, in which it only dissuaded (*Ap.* 31d2–4), and Xenophon's, in which its advice was sometimes positive (*Mem.* 1.1.4). In the early fourth century BC δαιμόνιον can be only an adjective, whether substantivized by the neuter article or used to qualify σημείον ("sign") as, for example, at *Republic* 6.496c4; even the other new δαιμόνια that Socrates was accused by Meletus of introducing in place of the city's gods are shown by the *elenchus* at *Apology* 27b3–c2 to be divine things, not godlings. Even Cicero, though writing at a time when the diminutive δαιμόνιον existed, at *De divinatione* 1.122 correctly makes Socrates

speak of “something divine (*divinum quiddam*) that he calls δαίμόνιον”; it is true that in §§123–4 its manifestations are described as warnings “by the god” (*a deo*), but the second passage comes from *Apology* 40b, where Socrates has not been halted by “the god’s sign” (τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ σημεῖον), the sign being from a god and not a god itself. However, this distinction is annulled in the not yet suspected *Theages* at 131a5–7, where the name-character speaks of propitiating “the divine (θεῖον) thing that befalls you” by means of “prayers and sacrifices and whatever else the seers spell out”; that is how gods are appeased, nor is it accidental that precisely at this point the word for “divine” becomes that derived from the regular word for “god” (θεός). Nor was it difficult, once the word could be construed as a noun, to associate Socrates’ inner voice with the δαίμονες, halfway between gods and men (*Symp.* 202d–203a), assigned to individuals as their guardians (*Ti.* 90a).

A reader determined to find the original sense in the incidental discussions of Socrates’ δαίμόνιον that give Plutarch’s dialogue no. 69 in Lamprias’ catalogue its misleading name, rather than acquiesce in the usual Latin translation *De genio Socratis*, cannot be refuted; nowhere does syntax forbid, and at 588e3–4 the phenomenon is conjectured to be not the sound but the silent communication of a δαίμων (which communication could of course be described by the adjective), such as Timarchus encounters when he visits Trophonius’ grotto; on the other hand at 583b10, “the δαίμόνιον of Lysis, who was already dead, clearly revealed to us his decease,” the reference can hardly be to anything but a spirit. By contrast Maximus of Tyre says unambiguously that Socrates had a friendly, prophetic, δαίμόνιον always accompanying him (*Dialexis* 8.1); here, in the absence of τῇ, there would be no doubt that the word was a substantive even if the author did not go on to rhapsodize about δαίμονες. Nor is there any doubt that Apuleius, whose language afforded no correspondingly equivocal term, in the work known to modern scholars as *De deo Socratis* took the δαίμόνιον to be the guardian *daemon* assigned as in Platonic teaching to every individual, so to Socrates, who had the wisdom to worship this god.

Little could be further from Gellius’ way of thinking. To be sure he is no atheist, but he is also no enthusiast; he never doubts the city’s religion, but (like other Roman writers) qualifies with “as if” accounts of divine intervention not officially acknowledged (6.1.6, 12.8.3), allowing the reader to believe or disbelieve at will. He may have felt something of the queasiness about private access to divinity that underlay Meletus’ accusation, and not been reassured by Xenophon’s representation of it as no different in principle from recognized kinds of omen (*Mem.* 1.1.2–4, *Ap.* 13); at any rate he leaves the topic alone. Indeed, so rigorously is the Gellian Socrates cut off from the supernatural that not even the Pythia’s response to Chaerephon is mentioned. (Nor would one

ever guess from his writings that Platonism was beginning to take a mystical turn, any more than that there was such a religion as Christianity.)

He also seems to skirt around the Socratic art of love on which Favorinus had written. We have seen that he makes Antonius Julianus stand aside from Socrates' *jeu d'esprit* in Plato's *Phaedrus*; his only other reference to that dialogue is Taurus' complaint (1.9.9) that some students wish to begin with it on account of Lysias' speech on the same theme, as others wish to begin with the *Symposium* on account of Alcibiades' revelry. Gellius makes no mention of Socrates' further discussions of love in either dialogue, even though in 17.20, when Taurus' class is reading the *Symposium*, a passage is cited from Pausanias' speech (180a4–181e6):

For every activity is like this: in itself it is neither honorable (καλή, "beautiful") nor dishonorable (αἰσχρά, "ugly"). For example, what we are doing now, either drinking or singing or conversing: none of these by itself is honorable, but it is in the performance that, as it is performed, so it proves to be; performed honorably and correctly it becomes honorable, but not correctly, dishonorable. Thus loving and love are not in all cases honorable or worthy of praise, but (only) the love that impels us to love honorably.

Gell. 17.20

Taurus asks Gellius, whom he suspects of having come to Athens purely to master Greek eloquence, whether any of his orators can produce such elegant prose, then bids him put that consideration aside and concentrate on the thought; Gellius, however, is inspired to translate Plato's Greek into Latin, and shares with us the result. On the face of it, this shows a man more interested in style than in content, thus bearing out Taurus' suspicion; nevertheless, even if Gellius were not at pains to show that he overcame them (at 2.2.2 he stays behind talking to Taurus after the class has been dismissed; at 7.13.1 he is one of these "closer," *iunctiores*, to him), it would be difficult to suppose that the content made no impression on him. That content, however, is confined to the principle that the moral quality of an action depends on the circumstances, of which he advances a variant in Stoic language at 2.7.18. He takes no notice of its application: what Agathon's lover deems honorable is homosexual pederasty aimed at education in virtue, a notion that in the *Symposium* Diotima did not refute but elevated to the higher plane of the Beautiful, which she designated by the same Greek word that in Pausanias' speech has been translated "honorable." At Rome, however, where sexual relations between male citizens were illegal, this simply would not do; there is not a word of it in Gellius.

Roman disapprobation is manifest in Cicero, who at *Tusculan Disputations* 4.70 debunks philosophers' language about love by asking why no-one loves an ugly youth or a handsome old man, and asserts that even if no unchastity takes place, such relationships are fraught with anxiety. The term he uses there for love as commended by philosophers is *amor amicitiae*, literally "love of friendship," an unusual expression found before the sixth century in only one other place, the chapter-summary of the lost *NA* 8.6: after illustrating the inutility of mutual recriminations after petty quarrels have been made up by quotations from Taurus and Theophrastus, Gellius continues: "and what Cicero too thought *de amore amicitiae*, appended with his own words." In principle this phrase might mean, as it does in Caesarius of Arles (*Sermo* 21.4), "of the love pertaining to friendship" (and its Greek counterpart ὁ φιλίας ἔρως does at Pseudo-Lucian, *Amores* 47, for love such as that of Orestes and Pylades); if so, Cicero's own words would be quotations from *Laelius*, where, however, the expression does not occur. Had Gellius wished to express that sense, rather than reapply a phrase that Cicero uses with quite another implication, he would in all probability have written *de amore et amicitia*, "of love and friendship"; Franz Skutsch, in Carl Hosius' edition of Gellius, proposed restoring that phrase, but in the absence of the text we have no warrant for emendation of the summary, particularly since Gellius is capable of yoking together quite disparate items in a single chapter ("And while we are on the subject of friendship ..."). So long as we retain the transmitted text, the reference can hardly be to anything other than the passage in the *Tusculans*; which if Gellius contented himself with quoting, he would appear to be casting doubt on the purity of Socrates' oft-recorded love for his handsome pupils, which certainly did not exclude physical appreciation ("Tomorrow, Phaedo, perhaps you will cut off those lovely locks," *Phd.* 89b4–5).

One might therefore suppose that Gellius, however much he revered the figure of Socrates in other respects, was repelled by his teachings on *erôs*; or if he thought them to be Plato's, he still did not find them worthy of mention. However, since elsewhere he does not seem perturbed by pederasty, another explanation should be considered (Holford-Strevens 2005, 105–7). Of no-one does Gellius speak with greater warmth than of Favorinus, whose charm and wisdom are so often on display as to make him seem a new Socrates; but in proclaiming devotion to a man with a lasting reputation for sexual promiscuity, Gellius risked suspicion of having been more than his pupil or even his familiar; it would not be difficult to name certain modern academics known as inspiring teachers, but also infamous (deservedly or not) for sexual predation, whose praise by former pupils might raise eyebrows, even though in contrast to ancient times censure is now concentrated on the taker of physical

favors and spares the giver. However, since citing Cicero was not necessarily a sufficient defense, and in any case risked darkening the picture, not merely of Favorinus' relations with his adherents, but of the *Socratica amoenitas*, it is not impossible that, as in 10.22, he distinguished between genuine and sham philosophers, which in this context meant distinguishing the *erôs* practiced by the former from the mere self-indulgence of the latter. Even so, it can hardly have been more than a brief mention; for whatever reason, Gellius did not care to dwell on this theme, in contrast not only to Favorinus and to Maximus of Tyre, but to Plutarch, who had allowed the relation to be heterosexual, and to Fronto and Prince Marcus, who at least affect an erotic relationship in their correspondence (Richlin 2006). Love of any kind, in fact, has no particular place among Gellius' concerns, except when in abnormal cases it leads to demonstrative mourning (Artemisia in 10.18, Herodes Atticus in 19.12) or is felt by a dolphin for a boy (6.8).

A final absence is Socrates' name in examples of propositions ("Socrates is walking"), such as we find in Stoic logicians, in Galen (not only in his *Introduction to Logic*), in Alcinous the Platonist, and corrupted to *Sortes* in medieval logic. When Gellius discusses propositional logic in 16.8, despite his Greek sources he uses proper names from Roman history (along with Hannibal) in sentences that Roman readers would know to be true or false; the one exception, §9 "if Plato is walking, Plato is moving" ("Plato," like "Dio," is an attested alternative) would gain nothing from a Roman subject.

4 Socrates in Gellius' Contemporaries

We should not expect Gellius, who was not a philosopher despite his studies with Favorinus and Taurus, or even his occasional display of the somewhat watery Stoicism fashionable at the time (Hertz 1865, 36), to ask such a question as Marcus Aurelius does at *Meditations* 7.66, how we know that Telauges—the shabby Pythagorean in a dialogue by Aeschines—was not superior in character to Socrates, let alone to say that the answer depends not on the qualities described by Plato but on his ability to satisfy the requirements of Stoic virtue. By contrast, the serious Greek Platonists of the age have little to say of Socrates (so far as their works are preserved), though Numenius, deceived by the second Platonic epistle, ascribes to him the tritheism that he extracts from it, and represents Plato as blending Pythagoras and Socrates by tempering the former's loftiness and the latter's playfulness; for abundance of Socratic reference we must fall back on Maximus of Tyre, since Favorinus, in whom it is also frequent, was not a Platonist.

Galen mentions Socrates several times, often drawing on Plato, sometimes pairing him with Lycurgus (the early Stoic Sphaerus had already written three books on the theme), observing his mixture of the serious with the playful (*On the Use of Parts* 1.9), and showing himself sufficiently aware that not everything in Plato is Socratic (Rosen 2009; Stover 2016, 23–4) as to observe that the major non-ethical discourses are ascribed to Timaeus, Parmenides, and Zeno, not to his master (*Hippocrates and Plato* 9.7.15–15). Nevertheless, his ethical works included the lost *In Reply to Favorinus against Socrates* listed at *On his Own Books* 15.1 (Bourdon-Millot), presumably directed against the treatise on Socrates' art of love, though it may also have dealt with epistemological matters (Opsomer 1997, 35 n. 61).

Aelius Aristides, despite acknowledging that Lycurgus and Socrates had won the gods' vote, is, as we have seen, a less than wholehearted admirer; indeed, he represents Socratic *eirōneia* as concealed boasting (Περὶ τοῦ παραφθέγγματος 83) and airs the suggestion that Pericles was more useful on campaign (Πρὸς Καπίτωνα 34). Lucian is happy to represent him as enjoying the company of handsome youths even when he is dead, but although he has his fun with him he is never hostile: even when in *Fishermen* he makes him lead a lynch-mob of dead philosophers, brought back to life, against an invented character called Parrhesiades ("Freespeaker"), it is Socrates who first recognizes the justice of the prisoner's demand for a fair trial. There is no insight into Socrates' personality or teaching, nor would one expect there to be.

In the Latin world, we have seen that Apuleius praises Socrates' wisdom in *De deo Socratis*; elsewhere, in asserting that the philosopher had bidden a handsome but silent youth "Say something, that I may see you" (*Flor.* 2.1, perhaps distorting Pl. *Chrm.* 154e5–7), he calls him his (intellectual) ancestor, which does not prevent him from bestowing the name on a parody Socrates of low morals in Book 1 of *Metamorphoses* (Keulen 2007, 28, 161) before declaiming on the real Socrates' divinely acknowledged wisdom and unjust condemnation at 10.33.3. In his defense against the charge of magic, in which having a mirror is made a count against him, he retells Socrates' commendation of the mirror as an incentive to moral effort (15.4–6), a story also told by Diogenes Laertius (2.33) but paralleled without reference to Socrates in a fable by Phaedrus (2.8); sneered at for poverty, he asserts that this "in Aristides was just, in Phocion kindly, in Epaminondas martial, in Socrates wise, in Homer eloquent" (18.7); brought into suspicion for understanding natural causes, he notes that Empedocles' purifications, Socrates' *daemonion*, and Plato's Good had also been suspect (27.3). At *Florida* 20.5–6, Socrates' hymns are listed with other writers' works in genres all of which Apuleius has himself cultivated. He is also twice mentioned in relation to others: at 9.15 Hippias of Elis, on whom Apuleius

is about to expatiate, is Socrates' contemporary; in the false preface to *De deo Socratis* (2) Aristippus is prouder of having been his pupil than of founding the Cyrenaic school. The possibly inauthentic *De Platone et eius dogmate* recounts Socrates' encounter with Plato in a vision and the flesh, the latter becoming his star pupil and his follower in moral philosophy.

If that is all that a self-styled philosopher has to say, it is at least more than we are offered by the Emperor's (and in a loose sense Gellius' own) former teacher Fronto, who, though not as hostile to philosophy in general as he is to the Stoicism for which his pupil had turned his back on rhetoric, shows only the most superficial engagement with it. Socrates' habit of trapping his opponents and wrapping his rebukes in friendly language is deployed against Marcus' dislike of insincerity (p. 48.5–21 van den Hout); he is credited with the opinion that pleasure and pain are interconnected (*Phd.* 60b 4–c4; p. 64.12–14), which Chrysippus, as quoted by Gellius, ascribes to Plato (fr. 1150 Dufour at *NA* 7.1.6). In the letters that Fronto wrote attempting to reclaim the Emperor for rhetoric, Socrates is included in a list of philosophers glibly characterized by single competences in that art for his skill in refutation (p. 134.9, 13), reappearing a few lines later together with his eminent pupils in another list preserved without a context (p. 135.19–20), and again as the wise counterpart to the foolish Alcibiades as Solon is to Croesus and Polycrates to Periander (138.17–18). Elsewhere, Fronto declares that from the writings of Socrates' followers one might judge the charm and wit of Aspasia's pupil and Alcibiades' teacher (230.16–19), and asserts that his longing for Phaedrus when the latter was absent was no greater than his own for Marcus (250.1–3), to whom he addresses a letter in the tradition of the *Phaedrus* on the superior claims of the nonlover, but warning the recipient against heeding a rival.

5 Conclusion

Living many centuries after a man who left nothing in writing, Gellius was unlikely to discover anything new about him, though Favorinus, quoting the prosecutor's oath, could assert that the document still survived in the Metroon at Athens (fr. 41 Amato at *DL* 2.40; for discussion see Amato 2010, 220–4); nevertheless, the *Noctes Atticae* contain anecdotes, however dubious their historicity, that happen not to be preserved elsewhere. Those about Xanthippe, like others that Gellius relates, testify to Socrates' patience and his temperance; the story of Euclides shows him as a teacher whose company a pupil would not forbear despite the obstacles of international politics. In other chapters having been taught by Socrates confers authority and guarantees moral worth.

The chief content of that teaching is ethical, which does not surprise, and concerns everyday morality, without prescriptions possible only for an intellectual or other elite; in this he resembles Gellius himself, who though in matters of language an elitist who despises the common schoolmaster as much as he does the vulgar herd, in matters of ethics makes no demands that the ordinary citizen could not meet. However, ethics are not his only attraction for Gellius, who recognized that the Socratic method of questioning as if from ignorance could be transferred from philosophy to grammar. He makes good use too of other Socratic legacies, the dialogue and the search for precise definition, even if transferred from abstract concepts to concrete objects. In his engagement with the son of Sophroniscus, Gellius withstands comparison with several contemporaries of greater philosophical repute.

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PART 4

Late Antiquity and the Medieval Period



The Reception of Socrates in Tertullian

Juraj Franek

Is there anything in common between a philosopher and a Christian, a disciple of Greece and a disciple of heaven (Tert. *Apol.* 46.18)? Is there anything in common between Athens and Jerusalem (Tert. *De praescr. haeret.* 7.9)? Tertullian does not say directly, yet the context as well as the rhetorical framing of these questions invite negative answers.¹ What, then, of the relation between one specific philosopher, Socrates, and one specific Christian, Tertullian? The verdict of the scholarly commentariat is far from being unanimous. Some have focused their attention on Tertullian's biting critiques of the Athenian and concluded that he is "one of the few Christian authors unwilling to deal favorably with Socrates";² it has been claimed that his animosity "at times reaches spitefulness."³ Others have paid attention to his more accommodating side and argued that the death of Socrates is for Tertullian "a paradigm of the champion of truth and justice" and the man himself "a prime example of the eternal law that makes the just suffer."⁴ Others still have offered an evolutionary account of the reception of Socrates by Tertullian, in which the initial acceptance of the Greek philosopher by the Christian apologist is replaced by scorn and irony following the latter's adherence to the New Prophecy.⁵

As I hope to show, these generalized claims are neither entirely wrong nor entirely right. Tertullian's overarching tactic is to use the figure of Socrates as a powerful talking point in his apologetic enterprise and his interpretation of the Athenian therefore varies significantly with the shifting targets of his critique. If at times incoherent in his judgments and clearly motivated by confessional needs, Tertullian is the first Latin Christian author to discuss Socrates. In the context of ante-Nicene Christian literature, both Latin and Greek, he is also one

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- 1 Stanton 1973 argues that the syntactical structure of these questions is one commonly used to contrast two irreconcilable opposites. Chadwick 1966, 1, writes, quite rightly, that Tertullian "presupposes that the correct and indeed the only true answer to his question is 'Nothing whatever.'"
 - 2 Jackson 1977, 193. For similar conclusions: Lilla 2008, 5038; Frede 2006, 200; Melinossi 1930, 139–40.
 - 3 Döring 1999, 60.
 - 4 Benz 1951, 220–1.
 - 5 Opelt 1983, 194–7.

of his most extensive commentators, mentioning him by name no less than thirty times. Although we cannot expect Tertullian to enhance our knowledge of historical Socrates—the passion and zeal of his commitment to the defense of faith by all means necessary makes him far removed from the ideal of a disinterested doxographer—his reception of the Athenian sage influenced many later Latin Christian authors and offers unique insights into the earliest Christian confrontations with Greek philosophy. In what follows, I will review and comment on the most relevant references to Socrates in Tertullian's oeuvre and show how they inform and reflect his views on the relationship between Christianity and “earthly wisdom.”

1 *Adeo quid simile philosophus et christianus?*

Some preliminaries for assessing Tertullian's views on both Socrates and ancient philosophy come out in the opening sections of his treatise *On the Soul* (*De anima*). At the very beginning of this “often one-sided reply to the pagan doctrines of the soul,”⁶ he admits that he shall have to “contend primarily with the philosophers” (*De an.* 1.1)—and what better place to start than in “the prison of Socrates”? Tertullian does not object to the conclusions reached by Socrates in Plato's *Phaedo*, chief among them the immortality of human soul. He does, however, object to the method through which this key proposition is reached and to its epistemic justification. As I have argued elsewhere,⁷ the earliest Christian authors (Tertullian included) make ample use of a complex argumentative strategy to justify their religious beliefs through the power of miracles, superior moral behavior of Christians, divine inspiration, revelation and, ultimately, the governing rule of faith. Propositions that are in accordance with the Scriptures and the rule of faith are epistemically secure, while the conclusions of ancient philosophers that rely on reason unaided by revelation are dubious at best and spurious fodder for heresies at worst. In the first chapter of *On the Soul*, Tertullian stages a dramatic scene to illustrate this dichotomy, with Socrates playing the leading role.

Death already casts a long shadow over the philosopher and he knows well that his days are numbered. What clear and certain knowledge, given these stressful existential circumstances, could then be in the possession of his soul and mind (*De an.* 1.2)? Tertullian contends that his mind must be either “paralyzed” (*consternata*) or “distracted” (*exsternata*) by the fear of imminent

6 Kitzler 2015, 44.

7 Franek 2016b.

death; and even if we accept, for the sake of the argument, that it is “calm and peaceful,”⁸ the very effort to suppress natural emotions in saying last goodbyes to his loved ones—his wife and children—must have shaken its constancy. Moreover, a philosopher is a creature ever craving for glory (*gloriae animal*), incapable of simple consolation when unjustly sentenced to death. The show Socrates puts up is an exercise in futility, its prime objective to spite the accusers by not feeling let down on death row.

Tertullian the armchair psychoanalyst eventually arrives at a peculiar conclusion: Socrates’ much celebrated “wisdom” must be the result of “deliberate and artificial composure, rather than an assurance of an ascertained truth” (*De an.* 1.4). Is it any wonder? None can attain the truth but God, none can attain God but Christ, none can attain Christ but Holy Spirit, and none can attain Holy Spirit but through the mystery of faith. But Socrates, as Tertullian immediately points out, referencing his enigmatic δαιμόνιον, has rather lived in the company of an Unholy Spirit. The Greek philosopher has been proclaimed the wisest, that much is true, but by the “Pythian demon.”⁹ Compare these spurious credentials to the Christian wisdom that destroys all power of demons (*De an.* 1.5)! Christian wisdom does not introduce new gods and demons, but expels false idolatry; it does not corrupt the youth, but rather raises the saplings to chastity; it does not bear the unjust condemnation of one single city (Athens), but of the whole world; it does not opt for an easy way out by poison, but suffers cruelty and flames (*De an.* 1.6).

In a flurry of exuberant and passionate rhetoric that one of the more disillusioned commentators of this section characterized as “petty arrogance,”¹⁰ Tertullian makes clear that Socrates, even at his best, can hardly be a role model for a Christian.¹¹ The overture of his treatise *On the Soul* underlines a more general tendency of reducing the life and the philosophy of the Athenian to the events of his trial and the sentence, to the prison and the hemlock; a tendency typical not only in the reception of Socrates by Tertullian, or even more broadly in early Christianity,¹² but in Hellenistic and Roman philosophical

8 This is, indeed, how Plato describes Socrates, dying ἀδεῶς καὶ γενναίως (*Phd.* 58e4) and accepting the poisoned chalice ἴλεως ... οὐδὲν τρέσας οὐδὲ διαφθείρας οὔτε τοῦ χρώματος οὔτε τοῦ προσώπου (*Phd.* 117b3–5).

9 Cf. *Pl. Ap.* 21a4–7.

10 Dassmann 1993, 41.

11 As Kaufman 1991, 174, points out, “to recycle and rely on the authority of Socrates’ final thoughts without allowing for extenuating and debilitating circumstances was irresponsible, but it was, Tertullian suggested, typically philosophical—ahistorical and discreditable.”

12 Franek 2016a.

literature as well.¹³ Tertullian does not discuss Socrates' philosophy; he is interested only in the man himself.¹⁴ And while there are minor asides—a dream featuring Socrates and Plato is referenced in the context of prophecies (*cynus de sinu Socratis demulcens homines discipulus Plato est, De an. 46.9*);¹⁵ the locution “prison of Socrates” (*carceribus Socratis, De an. 6.7*) is used with an almost proverbial force, as is his “god” (*illum deum Socratis, De an. 12.1*)¹⁶—the exclusive focus on biographical anecdotes and last moments of Socrates' life makes it convenient to analyze his reception by Tertullian through the lenses of the three charges of the indictment put forward against him by Meletus.¹⁷

2 “Socrates is guilty of not believing in the gods which the city believes in ...”

In the earliest Christian reception of Socrates, the motif of a man unjustly persecuted for his opposition to idolatry has become a *locus classicus*. Convincing arguments have been put forward for a strong Socratic presence in the construction of the Lukan passion narrative¹⁸ and *Martyrdom of Polycarp*.¹⁹ Several acts and passions of the martyrs explicitly mention Socrates as a

13 Giannantoni 2001, 8; Erler 2001, 203; Gourinat 2001, 161; Görler 2001, 243–4. Russell 2004, 132, quite correctly observed that “what the gospel account of the Passion and the Crucifixion was for Christians, the *Phaedo* was for pagan or free-thinking philosophers.”

14 There appears to be a scholarly consensus that antiquity did not know or care about the “Socratic problem”; see Long 1988, 152; Erler 2001, 209; Brancacci 2001, 169. Tertullian, however, does differentiate between Socrates and Plato on at least one occasion. In *De testimonio animae*, he defends the epistemic reliability of the senses against Plato and reports that the head of the Academy *ne quod testimonium sensibus signet, propterea et in Phaedo ex Socratis persona negat se cognoscere posse semetipsum, ut monet Delphica inscriptio* (*De an. 17.12*). The expression “in the person of Socrates” makes clear that Tertullian attempts to distinguish Plato's own ideas from those of his philosophical hero and it is only symptomatic that whenever an issue of doctrine is raised (here: the unreliability of senses), he ascribes it to Plato and not to Socrates.

15 The story about Socrates' dream of the swan on the eve of his first meeting with Plato is found in Apul. *De dog. Plat.* 1.1.182–3 and other ancient authors; see Waszink 2010, 495.

16 It is unclear whether the “god” referred to here is νοῦς or δαίμόνιον; see Waszink 2010, 202–3, for discussion.

17 DL 2.40: ἀδικεῖ Σωκράτης, οὓς μὲν ἡ πόλις νομίζει θεοὺς οὐ νομίζων, ἕτερα δὲ καινὰ δαίμονια εἰσηγούμενος· ἀδικεῖ δὲ καὶ τοὺς νέους διαφθείρων. τίμημα θάνατος. A wealth of materials for the trial of Socrates may be found in Brickhouse and Smith 2002.

18 Sterling 2001.

19 Cobb 2014.

prototype.²⁰ As the opening of his treatise *On the Soul* makes clear, Tertullian does not allow for a positive juxtaposition of persecuted Christians (to say nothing of Jesus) with the Athenian sage and he could never agree with Justin the Martyr, who argued that Socrates was, in a sense, a proto-Christian.²¹ Pagans' hands may never reach the palm of martyrdom, but even so, Tertullian draws on the first part of charges against Socrates to depict the Athenian as a relentless, if confused, critic of false idols of the Greek religion.

In both his *To the Nations* (*Ad nationes*) and *Apology* (*Apologeticum*), Tertullian argues that Socrates was condemned to death because he “destroyed the worship of [Greek] gods” (*propterea damnatus est Socrates, quia deos destruebat*, *Apol.* 14.7),²² indeed, the man even “had some knowledge of the truth because he denied the existence of [Greek] gods” (*aliquid de ueritate sapiebat deos negans*, *Apol.* 46.5). And while a persecuted Christian and a Greek philosopher sentenced to death share in little, both cases token the same general principle—the truth is always hated (*olim, id est semper, ueritas odio est*, *Apol.* 14.7),²³ the truth is always criminalized (*ueritas semper damnabatur*, *Ad nat.* 1.4.6). To establish Socrates as a critic of the Olympians and their worship, Tertullian uses the following three observations.

Firstly, Socrates has been found guilty on the charge that he did not believe in the gods of the city. Furthermore, as Tertullian readily points out, following his death, the Athenians performed a remarkable volte-face, punishing the accusers and erecting a statue in his honor.²⁴ In a rather peculiar reading of these events, Tertullian seems to argue that they confirm *not* the invalidity of the charge but rather the validity of Socrates' critique of the pagan idols. The city's sudden change of heart means not that it incorrectly judged Socrates not to believe in the gods of the city, but that his compatriots eventually realized that he was right in not so believing.

Tertullian's second argument for the interpretation of Socrates as a critic of Greek religion is provided by his curious swearing practice. Swearing by

20 See esp. *M. Apollon.* 40–1 and *M. Pion.* 17.2–3. For the reception of Socrates in early Christian martyrological literature, see Roskam 2010.

21 Justin *Apol.* 46.3.

22 Cf. Tert. *Ad nat.* 1.4.6: *Denique Socrates ex ea parte damnatus est, quia propius temptauerat ueritatem, deos uestros destruendo.*

23 Cf. Tert. *Apol.* 46.6: *In quantum odium flagrat ueritas, in tantum qui eam ex fide praestat offendit; qui autem adulterat et affectat, hoc maxime nomine gratiam pangit apud insectatores ueritatis.*

24 Tert. *Apol.* 14.8: *Tamen cum paenitet iam sententiae Athenienses, ut criminatores Socratis postea effligerint et imaginem eius auream in templo collocarint, rescissa damnatio et testimonium Socrati reddit.* Tertullian repeats himself almost verbatim in *Ad nat.* 1.10.42; the story is reported in DL 2.43.

the gods was commonplace in Greco-Roman antiquity, yet literary Socrates was often depicted as swearing by non-divine entities,²⁵ most notably by a dog, in the form of *μὰ τὸν κύνα* (Pl. *Grg.* 461a7–8) or *νῆ τὸν κύνα* (Pl. *Phdr.* 228b4). The *Suda* (ρ 13) identifies this practice as “Rhadamanthys’ oath”²⁶ and its earliest attested aetiology is reported by a scholiast commenting on Aristophanes’ *Birds*, who informs us, on the authority of Sosicrates of Rhodes, that Rhadamanthys, out of piety, “prohibited everyone from swearing [by the gods] and instructed them to swear by a goose, a dog, a ram, and other similar entities.”²⁷ While this account establishes an essentially pious and reverential motivation for Socratic swearing, some ancient authorities saw the matter differently, with Flavius Josephus being one of the first to identify this practice as the primary reason for Socrates’ conviction at the trial.²⁸ Tertullian drew on this perceived causal link between Socratic swearing by non-divine entities and his critique of the pagan gods, conveniently omitting the fact that Socrates (in the Platonic dialogues) regularly did swear also by the gods of the traditional Greek pantheon, most notably by Hera.²⁹ According to Tertullian, however, Socrates swore by an oak tree, a goat, and a dog “to insult the gods” (*in contumeliam deorum*, *Apol.* 14.7 and *Ad nat.* 1.10.42).

It has been argued recently that Tertullian “cites the philosopher’s curious oaths to show that he was guilty of the other charge—the introduction to Athens of ‘new deities,’”³⁰ yet this does not seem to be correct, since it presupposes literal interpretation of Socratic swearing on Tertullian’s part. In addition to the pious “Rhadamantine” reading which makes Socrates a champion of piety, conveniently omitted in most of the early Christian accounts of this peculiar phenomenon, there are at least two other possible interpretations of Socratic swearing. As Lactantius explains, either Socrates swore by zoological and botanical entities because he wanted to make fun of

25 A full list of entities by which Socrates swore may be found in Patzer 2003, 94–5.

26 See the discussion in Geus 2000, 105–6; Patzer 2003, 97–8; and esp. Murphy 2016.

27 Σ Ar. *Aves* ad 521: Σωσιπράτης γὰρ ἐν τῷ β’ τῶν Κρητικῶν οὕτως φησὶ “Ραδάμανθους δὲ δοκεῖ διαδεξάμενος τὴν βασιλειαν δικαιοτάτος γεγενῆσθαι πάντων ἀνθρώπων. λέγεται δὲ αὐτὸν πρῶτον οὐδὲνα ἑάν ὄρκους ποιεῖσθαι κατὰ τῶν θεῶν, ἀλλ’ ὀμνύναι κελεῦσαι χῆνα καὶ κύνα καὶ κρινόν, καὶ τὰ ὅμοια.”

28 Joseph. *Ap.* 2.262–4. Barclay 2007, 319, argues that “although subsequently famous (Tertullian invents further variants, *Apol.* 14.7), this was probably not one of the charges in the trial ... Josephus is probably confused on the place of oaths in this matter.” The topic of Socratic swearing is discussed, with negative connotations, also by Theoph. *Ad Autol.* 3.2.

29 Socratic swearing by Hera was quite unorthodox (compared with, e.g., much more common swearing by Zeus) and has generated scholarly attention in recent years; see esp. Sommerstein 2008 and Sanders 2015.

30 Edwards 2007, 129.

religion—in which case he is “foolish, morally depraved, hopeless clown”; or he did so because he truly believed in such new deities—in which case he is “an idiot for making the foulest of animals his god” (*Div. inst.* 3.20.15). Tertullian accepts neither without qualification. He agrees with Lactantius that Socrates swore by non-divine entities to make fun of religion, yet he does not consider Socrates a clown, as he limits the targets of Socratic buffoonery to pagan idols, not *religio* (Christianity included) in general, thus opening a possibility for a distinctively positive evaluation of this practice. While it has been recognized that Tertullian’s interpretation of Socratic swearing has little to do with the historical Socrates,³¹ it makes it possible to present the Athenian as an insider critic of Greek religion.

Thirdly, Tertullian alludes to the Delphic oracle episode, in which Pythia (or Apollo) proclaimed the Athenian to be the wisest of all humans. How very foolish of the Delphic establishment, Tertullian ironically remarks, to elevate to the pedestal of human wisdom a man who denied the very existence of the gods populating the traditional Greek religious landscape.³² Wreathing Socrates the Destroyer of Greek Gods with garlands of wisdom completely invalidates in Tertullian’s eyes any authority Apollo might have enjoyed—and his reader is invited to contemplate the irony, laugh at the members of the Olympian pantheon, and then repudiate them as mere incompetent caricatures of true divinity.

Considering this strikingly positive reception of Socrates as an insider critic of false idols, one who even paid the ultimate price for “not recognizing the gods of the city,” why deny Socrates the place of a proto-martyr? For Tertullian, the answer lies in what he perceives to be the inconstancy and inconsistency of Socrates’ critique of the Greek gods.³³ He frequently relates the story of Socrates’ sacrifice of a cock to Asclepius moments before his death—a failure of nerve in Tertullian’s view, and a proof that only Christian martyrs can face

31 Geus 2000, 103. In a recent major survey of oaths and swearing in ancient Greece, Sommerstein 2014, 131, concludes that “Socrates’ oath by the dog ... seems to be a formula of ‘swearing without swearing’ so to speak, giving the semblance of the force and emphasis conveyed by the oath but without running the risk of divine punishment for falsehood.” A similar observation has been made by Montagu 1967, 26.

32 Tert. *Ad nat.* 1.4.7: *Itaque et sapientem non negabit, cui etiam Pythius uester testimonium dixerat: “uīrorum,” inquit, “omnium Socrates sapientissimus.” Vicit Apollinem ueritas, ut ipse aduersus se pronuntiaret; confessus est enim se deum non esse, sed eum quoque sapientissimum affirmans qui deos abnuebat.* Cf. also Tert. *Apol.* 46.6: *O Apollinem inconsideratum! Sapientiae testimonium reddidit ei uiro, qui negabat deos esse.*

33 Other charges against Socrates might have played a role as well. As Murphy 2016, 40, succinctly surmises, “taking Socrates’ oaths as typical of the man, and the man, of philosophy, Tertullian appeals to Socrates’ authority while undermining it.”

imminent death without blinking. On the one hand, Socrates denied the existence of the Greek gods “with almost complete certainty” (*quasi certus*); on the other, with the same certainty, he eventually ended up sacrificing to Asclepius (*Ad nat.* 2.2.12), an action that for Tertullian seems to be imbued with symbolic and religious significance.³⁴ Moreover, Asclepius is neither the only nor the most problematic divinity Socrates admitted, which brings us to the second part of the charges put forward against him.

3 “... and of introducing other new divinities ...”

While some authorities, as we have seen, connected the charge of “introducing new divinities” with Socrates’ swearing by a dog or other unusual suspects, the prime target of this accusation has always been the Socratic δαιμόνιον.³⁵ Tertullian discusses Socrates’ personal deity on several occasions and, despite several instances of a positive evaluation of the δαιμόνιον found in other early Christian authors, especially Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 1.133.2–4),³⁶ Tertullian consistently interprets it as a force of evil, a demon in the Christian sense of the term. The δαιμόνιον is singled out as a corrupting influence on young Socrates in the opening section of the treatise *On the Soul*, discussed above (*De an.* 1.4), and there are two more references to it the same work.

In chapter 25, Tertullian argues against the thesis that the human soul is introduced only *post partum* and acknowledges (against Plato) the possibility of coexistence of two souls in one body, as well as the possibility of a demonic presence in the soul of a human being, citing as a supporting example Socrates and his δαιμόνιον (*De an.* 25.8) alongside the New Testament’s seven spirits of Magdalene (*Lk* 8.1–3; *Mk* 16.9) and a legion of demons in the Gadarene exorcist narrative (*Mk* 5.1–13; *Lk* 8.26–33; *Mt* 8.28–34). This parallelization makes clear that Tertullian understands the Socratic δαιμόνιον as an evil spirit. In chapter 39,

34 Tert. *De cor.* 10.5: *et ego mihi gallinaceum macto, non minus quam Aesculapio Socrates.* Tertullian argues here that the things of this world are pure in themselves and it is the use we put them to that matters. Killing a cock is by no means problematic *per se*; killing a cock as a sacrifice to Asclepius is idolatry.

35 Modern scholarly discussions of the Socratic δαιμόνιον cannot be expounded here in any detail. See McPherran 1996, 133–9, for an assessment of the role of the δαιμόνιον as a part of the charges against Socrates. Reeve 1989, 68–70; Vlastos 1991, 280–7; McPherran 1996, 185–208; and Brickhouse and Smith 1994, 189–95, are good starting points for investigating how this apparently irrational element squares with Socrates’ (professed) rationality.

36 Other sections of interest include *Strom.* 5.99.3 and 5.91.3–5. As Bady 2015, 121, observes, Socratic δαιμόνιον is interpreted by Clement “non pas comme Satan, mais en quelque sorte, et de façon aussi rare que paradoxale, comme un ange gardien.”

he argues that evil spirits or demons corrupt the purity of the human soul from the outset and explains that demonic possessions of pagan children are due to idolatry, which is omnipresent in religious rituals connected with the birth of a child. When idolatry is the midwife, Tertullian claims, it is not surprising that new-borns are at risk of being possessed by a demon, which is exactly what happened to Socrates (*sic igitur et Socraten puerum adhuc spiritus daemonicus inuenit*, *De an.* 39.3).

If allusions to the Socratic δαιμόνιον in the treatise *On the Soul* serve as arguments for specific propositions in the field of Christian psychology, the remaining two mentions in Tertullian's *Apology* aim to establish the very existence of evil demonic forces in the world. In chapter 22, Socratic δαιμόνιον is mentioned as a proof that even pagan philosophers recognized the existence of demons (*sciunt « daemonas » philosophi, Socrate ipso ad daemonis arbitrium expectante*, *Apol.* 22.1)—and several other early Christian apologists exploited Socrates' private divine connection in the same way.³⁷ In the concluding peroration of the *Apology*, Tertullian highlights the inability of earthly wisdom to fend off the demonic forces and questions the reasons for the persecution of Christians. The “name of the philosopher” is powerless to stop the demons; only Christians have what it takes to resist the evil.³⁸ Tertullian thus uses the Socratic δαιμόνιον as an argument for the existence of demons but he hastens to emphasize the disparity between pagans and Christians—the former are corrupted by them; the latter successfully fend them off.

It may be concluded that the interpretation of Socrates' δαιμόνιον is wholly negative (δαιμόνιον is simply identified with an evil spirit) and Tertullian used it *ad hoc* to provide arguments for (1) the very existence of demons; (2) their ability to possess human soul; (3) the claim that idolatrous pagan rituals connected with childbirth facilitate the entry of demons into young children; and, finally, (4) philosophers (unlike Christians) being powerless to stop them.

4 “... and he is guilty of corrupting the youth”

The final item in the charge against Socrates is of a strictly moral nature and Tertullian was more than happy to allude to what he perceived as the Athenian's compromised ethical standards. This is not too surprising since Christian apologists often contrasted the superiority and consistency of Christian

37 Cf. Min. Fel. *Oct.* 26.9; Cyprian. *Quod idola dii non sint* 6; Lactant. *Div. inst.* 2.14.9.

38 Tert., *Apol.* 46.5; *Nomen hoc philosophorum daemona non fugiunt. Quidni? cum secundum deos philosophi daemonas deputent. Socratis uox est «si daemonium permittat».*

morality to what they perceived as the debauchery of pagans. Furthermore, it has been argued that the reason for Tertullian's conversion is to be found chiefly in the unfailing virtue of Christians, shining the brightest in their willingness to suffer martyrdom,³⁹ and as a corollary of the importance of virtuous life, Tertullian's criticism of the Greek and Roman philosophers is very often based on *ad hominem* attacks highlighting their depraved morality, rather than on discussions of doctrine.⁴⁰ Socrates, again, serves as a case in point.

There is a single instance in his writings where Tertullian, at least *prima facie*, introduces Socrates as a paragon of virtue, and even there he is the exception that proves the rule. In *Apology* 11, Tertullian briefly discusses Euhemerism, a philosophical theory of the origin of religion that can be traced back to the sophist Prodicus, who argued that gods were originally human beings that later became divinized.⁴¹ With unmistakable irony, so typical for both our main protagonists, the Christian apologist laments the less-than-ideal material for these apotheoses in pointing out, as Xenophanes did centuries before him (fr. 11 DK), the significant moral shortcomings of the Olympians. If we accept, for argument's sake, that gods are divinized human beings, why not choose better candidates? Pagans surely had in their midst individuals "virtuous, pure and good" (*probi, integri et boni*)—a prime example being Socrates, renowned for his wisdom (*Apol.* 11.15). While Tertullian seems to commend the Athenian in this section, the context makes clear that his primary aim is to ridicule a specific philosophical theory of the origin of religion rather than to speak highly of Socrates.⁴²

Notwithstanding Socrates' "wisdom," flawed as it may be in the eyes of a Christian for whom there is no secure knowledge to be found outside the scope of revelation, two further mentions of Socrates in the *Apology* are unambiguous in their critique of the philosopher as a morally depraved individual. In chapter 39, Tertullian extols the untold virtues of Christian societies: their unity, hope, charity, deeds of love, preparedness for martyrdom and, ultimately, their chastity. Indeed, Christians "share everything except for

39 Quasten 1964, 247; Osborn 1997, 251.

40 Hager 1978, 76–7, argues that Tertullian's two central points of contention with the philosophers are that (1) they live morally despicable lives, often in violation of the ethical doctrines they profess and (2) they are thieves, stealing bits and pieces of divine wisdom from the prophets of the Old Testament, corrupting them with admixed falsehoods.

41 On Prodicus and his theory of religion, see Franek 2013, 69–71. The most comprehensive and up-to-date study of Euhemerism is Roubekas 2017.

42 As Georges 2011, 224, observes, the list of purportedly virtuous pagan individuals "scheint sich [...] vorrangig am Wertmaßstab der Zuhörer zu orientieren; sie sind es ja, die von der relativen Wertlosigkeit ihrer Götter überzeugt werden sollen."

their wives" (*omnia indiscreta sunt apud nos praetor uxores, Apol.* 39.11), quite unlike pagans and their promiscuous practices. Is it any wonder, Tertullian asks, if even the great men of the ancient world, Socrates and Cato, shared their wives with friends? "This is the shining example of Greek wisdom and Roman gravity—the philosopher and the censor pimping around!" (*Apol.* 39.12–3). In the heat of the rhetoric and apologetic fervour, it is of little consequence that Cato the Elder did not share his wife and—as far as we know—neither did Socrates.⁴³

In the final sections of the *Apology*, another "comparison in chastity" between Christians and pagans takes place, this time with Tertullian reporting that Socrates has been found guilty of corrupting the youth (*si de pudicitia prouocemur, lego partem sententiae Atticae in Socratem: corruptor adulescentium pronuntiatur, Apol.* 46.10). Since the text continues with the assurance that "male Christians do not touch even females," Tertullian clearly understands the "corruption" as referring to pederasty, although it is much more likely that the charge originally referred to Socrates' intellectual, rather than physical, corruption of Athens' youth. It is, of course, symptomatic that the Christian apologist approvingly cites the accusations brought forth against Socrates in his "comparison in chastity," despite arguing elsewhere, as we have shown, that he was sentenced "unjustly."

5 *Certum est, quia impossibile*

Following this brief outline of the reception of Socrates by Tertullian, we may now return to the much-debated question of his attitude to philosophy in general. What, indeed, has the Christian and the philosopher in common? In one of his most famous, most misquoted, and most provocative statements, Tertullian concluded that the death of Christ is "believable, because foolish" and his resurrection "certain, because impossible."⁴⁴ Quite unsurprisingly,

43 Tertullian seems to confuse Cato the Elder and Cato the Younger, as a section in Plutarch's biography of him (*Cat. min.* 25, cf. also Quint. *Inst.* 10.5.13) shows that the latter might have in fact done what Tertullian thought the former did. Georges 2011, 563, seems to suggest that the confusion of the two Cato's might have been intentional, aiming to hurt the moral reputation of the censor. Regarding Socrates and his wife-sharing habits, Döring 1999, 61, argues plausibly that Tertullian might have had Plato's proposed communism of women in mind, see *Resp.* 457c10–d1.

44 Tert. *De carn. Christ.* 5.4: *Crucifixus est dei filius; non pudet, quia pudendum est. Et mortuus est dei filius; credibile, quia ineptum est. Et sepultus resurrexit; certum est, quia impossibile.* One of the most stimulating discussions of the paradox remains Williams 2006, 3–21 (reprint of the original 1955 version).

some have taken his words at face value and concluded that Tertullian is a fideist *par excellence*.⁴⁵ Others have tried to show that his *sacrificium intellectus* is apparent only and under the surface of his outrageous anti-rationalism there exists a plane of specifically Christian rationality;⁴⁶ others still have interpreted the paradox as an instance of (almost Hegelian) dialectic.⁴⁷ Several influential studies have underlined the indebtedness of Tertullian to the theory and practice of ancient rhetoric;⁴⁸ Timothy Barnes, in what remains one of the best general accounts of Tertullian's life and works available, called him a "Christian sophist";⁴⁹ his inspiration in the Pauline juxtaposition of the cross and earthly wisdom from the *1 Corinthians* is unequivocal.⁵⁰

I have argued elsewhere that Tertullian neither completely sacrifices the intellect on the altar of faith, nor is a "rationalist" in any modern sense of the word.⁵¹ He does claim that human reason, unaided by revelation, may well arrive at particular truths, yet these truths will lack proper epistemic justification; as he argues in his treatise *On the Soul* in a section immediately following the first chapter discussed above, it is undeniable that philosophers did, on occasion, chance upon the truth. The problem, in Tertullian's view, lies in the fact that

45 This interpretation of Tertullian is best articulated by Labhardt 1950; similar opinions are voiced by Quasten 1964, 320–1; Gilson 1986, 97. Refoulé 1956 and Braun 1971, while both less radical than Labhardt, underline Tertullian's subordination of philosophy and reason to the exigencies of faith. Cruciat 2016 analyzes in some detail the use of the words *philosophus* and *philosophari* in Tertullian's writings, concluding that he "esprime una concezione radicalmente negativa della *philosophia*."

46 The interpretation of Tertullian as a rationalist has been argued for as early as D'Alès 1905, 33, who claims that "dans la pensée de Tertullien, l'adhésion à la religion chrétienne est un acte éminemment raisonnable." Ayers 1979, 60, concludes that "Tertullian is not against philosophy *per se* but only against those metaphysical positions which he viewed as informing the heresies." Bauer 1970, Sider 1980, and Bochet 2008 propose various yet ultimately rationalist solutions to the paradox, as does Osborn 1997, 48–64, concluding that the interpretation of Tertullian as an irrationalist is improbable. Swinburne 2005, 23–4, considers several possible explanations, including the deflationist "inverted comma" reading with "absurd" meaning "apparently absurd" and "impossible" meaning "impossible by normal standards."

47 Barcala Muñoz 1976 and Wickert 1965, 159–68. Grosse 2004 argues that Tertullian consistently engages in a dialectic of confrontation and integration with non-Christians.

48 Moffatt 1916 was first to connect the paradox with Arist. *Rh.* 1400a5–9. Sider 1971 remains the classic account of the influence of ancient rhetoric on Tertullian. The topic has been reinvigorated recently by Dunn 2002; 2005; 2008.

49 Barnes 1985, 211–32.

50 Décaire 1961, 30–1, concludes that "le 'paradoxe' de Tertullien est donc celui de saint Paul, dans la première Épître aux Corinthiens; de même, son anti-rationalisme." For the importance of the Pauline opposition of the cross and earthly wisdom from *1Cor.* on Tertullian's thinking, see Scaglioni 1972.

51 Franek 2016b, 149–51.

this discovery of truth is akin to a ship stumbling on a safe harbor in the stormy dead of the night—all “happy chance” (*prospero errore*) and “blind luck” (*caeca felicitate*, *De anim.* 2.1). And why rely on chance and luck if everything a Christian would ever want or need to know has been made readily available to us by divine revelation, impeccably conserved in the Scripture and controlled by the rule of faith?⁵² The truth of Christianity is further secured by miracles, superior moral standards, fulfilment of prophecies, and the unstoppable spread of the new religion to the farthest reaches of the earth. Tertullian’s reception of Socrates is clearly guided by these general principles. The Christian apologist will not deny that he might have discovered certain truths—for instance, the idolatrous nature of Greek religion and worship, which he rightly criticized and ultimately rejected—yet the philosopher’s rendezvous with truth is neither consistent (he ultimately falters, sacrificing a cock to Asclepius) nor sufficient (since reason unaided by revelation could never establish the truth of the Son of God’s dying a criminal’s death on the cross).

Perhaps even more importantly, Tertullian is always first and foremost an apologist, a passionate defender of the Christian truth against unbelievers and heretics. His central aim is to vindicate Christ crucified and he uses all means necessary to achieve this end. The indebtedness of Tertullian to Stoics, for instance, has been long recognized and well documented.⁵³ Whenever a piece of ancient philosophy—for example, the Stoic category of relative disposition—helps his cause, he will happily use it (here: to argue against the monarchian heresy of Praxeas).⁵⁴ Marcia Colish, in her magisterial work on the reception of Stoicism, concludes with respect to Tertullian’s use of the Stoa the following:

The particular uses to which Tertullian puts his Stoicism are dictated by the exigencies of the contexts in which they occur. Since he is not interested in developing a systematic theology or systematic position on Stoicism, he should not be read as if he were working toward either of these goals. He is just as likely to criticize Stoicism as a source of heresy and to use it in a positive if ancillary manner or to combine it with Christian doctrine in such a way as to alter its essential meaning. No one of these orientations is predominant.

COLISH 1985, 29

52 On Tertullian and the rule of faith, see Braun 1962, 446–54; Waszink 1979 and Countryman 1982. Ferguson 2013 explores the Pauline grounding of the rule.

53 Shortt 1933, 37–47; Spanneut 1957, *passim*; Colish 1985, 9–29.

54 Osborn 1997, 125–7; Boersma 2014.

An identical conclusion holds for Tertullian's reception of the famous Athenian: one needs only to replace "Stoicism" with "Socrates" and "theology" with "doxography." Tertullian's knowledge about Socrates is surely not limited to Plato's dialogues, since he mentions details not found therein, such as the construction of a statue of Socrates in his honor—yet the Christian apologist is interested in the Athenian sage only insofar as he can help him advance the specific argument he happens to be developing.⁵⁵ When Tertullian criticizes Greek religion, he uses the figure Socrates as an example of internal pagan dissent, commending his bold rejection of idolatry. When his apologetic aim is to defend the existence of demons and their ability to possess human beings, the Socratic δαιμόνιον comes to the fore—and if that makes Socrates a demoniac, all the worse for him. When Tertullian stages the grand comparison between pagan and Christian morality and chastity, Socrates even comes through as a rather unlikable type that pimps his own wife and seduces the youngsters of Athens. The sentence passed against Socrates is both just and unjust, and the only controlling factor is the immediate apologetic aim at hand.

There are some apparent similarities between the philosopher and the Christian, too, yet most of them are only skin deep. Both were undoubtedly masters of subtle (and, in Tertullian's case, sometimes not so subtle) irony. Both struggled with paradoxes—one man professes to know nothing only to be pronounced to be the wisest of humans, the other finds his faith certain precisely because it is based on the scandalous and impossible notion of a crucified god—yet their solutions could not be farther apart. Plato's Socrates, confronted with the paradox of ignorance and knowledge, is ready and willing to prove the oracle wrong and to "go to the god with a refutation in [his] hand" (ἐλέγξων τὸ μαντεῖον, Pl. *Ap.* 21c1, in Jowett's wonderful if loose translation). He is, after all, a philosopher first and foremost, and a man who proudly asserts that he is and always has been "one of those natures who must be guided by reason, whatever the reason may be which upon reflection appears to [him] to be the best" (μηδενὶ ἄλλῳ πείθεσθαι ἢ τῷ λόγῳ ὃς ἂν μοι λογιζομένῳ βέλτιστος φαίνεται, Pl. *Cri.* 46b4–6, tr. Jowett). Not so Tertullian, a proud and defiant Christian who "does not acknowledge any other source of authority than revelation."⁵⁶ When confronted with the paradox of a god who died a shameful death among voices claiming "What is dead is dead," Tertullian "shall remember that God has judged the minds of the multitudes to be ashes and that the earthly wisdom has been pronounced foolishness [by him]" (Tert. *De res. carn.* 3.3).

55 According to Lortz 1927, 361, Tertullian valued Christian *simplicitas veritatis* so much that he never really tried to differentiate between a philosopher and a sophist or between reliable doxography and unsubstantiated gossip.

56 Daniélou 1978, 176.

It is said that the juxtaposition of Athens and Jerusalem—and, by extension, it might be added, Socrates and Tertullian—represents “the opposition between a mode of thought which believes that fact conforms to reason, and another which believes that reason must conform to the fact.”⁵⁷ For Tertullian, the fact is that ancient philosophy is an inherently flawed breeding ground of heresies that occasionally chances upon the truth; his treatment of Socrates is informed by this view. In comparison with other ante-Nicene Christian authors, Tertullian mentions Socrates the most (no less than 26 times), but—notwithstanding his qualified commendation of what he interpreted as Socrates’ biting, if incoherent, critique of Greek deities—his reception of the Athenian ranges among the more negative. The by far most characteristic feature of early Christian reception of Socrates he nevertheless does share with all his fellow *Fidei defensores*: as Michael Frede (to his own disappointment) concludes in his overview of the reception of Socrates in the early Christian literature, “ancient Christian remarks about Socrates for the most part follow a rather transparent pattern of argument which is dictated by their apologetic needs.”⁵⁸ One may only add that in Tertullian, this pattern is not followed “for the most part,” but with utmost consistency; and not only in the case of Socrates, but with any other philosopher of Antiquity.⁵⁹

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57 González 1974, 22.

58 Frede 2006, 201.

59 This study is a result of the project GA ČR 19-02741S “The Transmission and Transformation of Ideas in Hellenism, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity” funded by the Czech Science Foundation.

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Socrates in Stobaeus: Assembling a Philosopher

Susan Prince

We have three major reasons to take interest in the *Anthology* of John of Stobi (commonly called Stobaeus) and analogous reasons to care about its representation of Socrates. The *Anthology*, compiled in the early fifth century CE, is enormous in scope, systematic in structure, and rich in unique content. It stands as the latest work from antiquity that preserves a substantial quantity of otherwise unknown textual material from archaic, classical, Hellenistic, and late antique authors. In its full form, it consisted in 206 thematic chapters in four organized books and contained some 10,000 excerpts, sayings, and precepts attributed to some 500 philosophers, poets, and statesmen, from Homer to Themistius, from the Presocratic natural scientists like Thales to the Neoplatonic educators like Iamblichus.¹ According to the report of the ninth-century bibliophile Photius of Constantinople, our only ancient witness to the complete work of Stobaeus, the *Anthology* was composed for the purpose of inspiration and education of the author's son.² Internal evidence places its final composition around 425 CE, about a generation after the death

- 1 On Stobaeus overall, including the tremendous scale of his work and the importance of the material he transmits, see the studies in Reydam-Schils 2011, especially the surveys by Konstan and Searby; from a more strictly doxographical standpoint, see Mansfeld and Runia 1999, 196–271. Useful insights are in Piccione 1994, 1998, and her other works, as indexed in Reydam-Schils 2011. For a history of modern reconstruction, see Curnis 2008. The comprehensive essay by the editor of the modern edition, Hense 1916, remains fundamental to all work on Stobaeus.
- 2 The summary of Photius (codex 167 = Henry 1960, 2.149–54) includes titles for the 206 substantive chapters of the *Anthology*, which he knew as one work, not the *Eclogae* in Books 1–2 plus the *Florilegium* in Books 3–4 as transmitted in the manuscripts used by Wachsmuth and Hense 1883–1912, the standard modern edition. Photius reports the content of the *Anthology*'s two lost prefatory chapters, a praise of philosophy and a survey of schools of philosophy. His account ends in a list (with errors of omission and cases of duplication) of 204 contributing philosophers, 151 poets, and 120 statesmen and others. I estimate the sum 10,000 entries by multiplying the number of chapters by a rough average of 45–50 entries per chapter. 5,998 entries survive, according to my summation of the index in Searby 2011, 57–70. Books 3 and 4, well preserved, contain respectively 1,728 entries in 42 chapters and 3,345 entries in 57 chapters, at an average of 41.4 and 58.7 entries per chapter. 41 of the 206 chapters, including 33 of the 46 in Book 2, are completely lost except for their titles, and content from many of the surviving chapters is lost.

of its latest included author, Themistius, two of whose works are excerpted. In the portion of the *Anthology* available to us today, which is a reconstruction from partial transmissions in medieval manuscripts (roughly sixty per cent of the original), occur numerous excerpted passages well known from the direct manuscript tradition, such as all but one (and more) of the works of Plato,³ but also, more importantly for modern purposes, a large array of passages uniquely transmitted. These include Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*, the synthesis of Stoicism attributed to Arius Didymus, fragments of Solon, Epictetus, Favorinus and Iamblichus, everything we know from Teles and Musonius Rufus, and short excerpts from hundreds of lost tragedies and comedies, by Euripides, Menander, and many less familiar playwrights. The sayings and anecdotes attributed to Socrates—that is, under the marginal *lemma* Σωκράτους (“from Socrates”) or beginning with the speaker's name Σωκράτης—in Stobaeus' anthology include uniquely transmitted material, especially several prose excerpts from anonymous authors rarely cited in scholarship except as parallels.

As a gnomological collection, Stobaeus' record of Socrates might be dismissed as an assortment of oral lore with no claim on historicity, authenticity, or any other kind of importance. Since Socrates wrote nothing, we know that all attributions to him are formulated, and to various degrees fabricated, by others. Moreover, the apophthegmatic sayings attributed to Socrates in these anthologies cannot be expressive of his thinking uniquely, since many of the same sayings are attributed to various other authorities, from Pythagoras to Plutarch.⁴ Yet several points deserve our attention.

First, Stobaeus' apophthegmatic and anecdotal collection of Socratica, as published in the five volumes edited by Wachsmuth and Hense 1883–1912,⁵ is the largest such record, numbering 150 pieces, and as such serves as the basis for the collection of this material in Gabriele Giannantoni's *Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquiae*.⁶ The second most important set, from the *Gnomologium Vaticanum*, is less than a quarter as large, numbering 32 pieces, of which 12 overlap significantly or completely with Stobaeus and 20 are additional.⁷ If the account

3 On the probability that *Lysis*, the only Platonic dialogue unrepresented in the *Anthology* as it survives, was excerpted in the lost chapters on friendship from Stobaeus' second book, see Curnis 2011, 79–80. All other Platonic texts of the Thrasyllan catalogue, as well as the pseudonymous *Axiochus*, *Eryxias*, and *On Virtue*, are used in the *Anthology*.

4 The fullest study of these overlaps is Elter 1900.

5 All discussion that follows is based on the Wachsmuth-Hense edition. It is likely that a more complete edition of Stobaeus could be produced: see, e.g., Hense 5.v–xii and n. 48 (below).

6 144 Stobaean entries are catalogued by Giannantoni 1990, 1.105–127, as SSR I C 181–324. This set should be adjusted in certain ways, specified in n. 20.

7 SSR I C 325–349, which are *Gnom. Vat.* 470–500 plus 573, with omission of seven items that are catalogued as parallels to Stobaeus. Four additional parallels are noted in SSR, while the

of Socrates' sayings in Diogenes Laertius 2.29–40 is itemized to match the style of these anthologies, it contains 52 items,⁸ of which eight have parallels in Stobaeus⁹ and 44 are additional. (One item is included in all three of these collections: Stob. 3.17.21 = *Gnom. Vat.* no. 479 = DL 2.35.) Twenty of the items in Diogenes Laertius but not Stobaeus are drawn from Plato and Xenophon, and only one item from Plato is among the eight overlapping with Stobaeus. Stobaeus' large collection should be known as one of the standards to which other sets of Socratic sayings and episodes—especially those outside the scope of texts by Plato and Xenophon—are compared, when we interrogate their dating and heritage.

Second, the elaborate structure under which Stobaeus organized his excerpts, sayings, and anecdotes amounts to a kind of matrix of philosophy, and the way Stobaeus placed Socrates' voice within this matrix indicates the kind of philosopher Socrates was, according to Stobaeus and the tradition he received. Papyrological remains show that anthologies illustrating a single theme were circulating in the early Hellenistic period;¹⁰ but thematic organization of sayings and excerpts on a comprehensive scale is unique to Stobaeus and the collection *Loci Communes* of pseudo-Maximus, dependent partly on Stobaeus. The *Gnomologium Vaticanum*, like other such collections in manuscript, sorts the *apophthegmata* by speaker, not topic. From the vantage of Stobaeus' systematically comprehensive scope it matters less what Socrates says than where Stobaeus has him saying it.

Third, Stobaeus received, through the intermediate authors he used, a tradition containing utterances attributed to Socrates beyond the texts of Plato, Xenophon, and Aristophanes (whose *Clouds* is quoted only twice in the extant

Gnom. Vat. entries are numbered also. The only overlap I find that is not noted in *SSR* is *Gnom. Vat.* 497 and Stob. 4.31.90.

8 I count as follows: DL 2.29, six items, all from Plato and Xenophon; 2.30, four items, one from Plato; 2.31, six items, two from Plato and Xenophon; 2.32, eight items, five from Plato and Xenophon; 2.33, four items, none from Plato or Xenophon; 2.34, five items, one from Xenophon; 2.35, five items, three from Plato and Xenophon; 2.36, five items, none from Plato or Xenophon; 2.37, three items, one from Plato and Xenophon; 2.38, three items, one from Plato; 2.39, one item, with one source in Plato; 2.40, two items, none from Plato or Xenophon.

9 The overlaps are Socrates' learning to play the lyre in old age (DL 2.32/ Stob. 3.29.68), which is probably drawn from Pl. *Euthyd.* 272c; his saying that those who marry regret it (DL 2.33/ Stob. 4.22.59); his recommendation of the mirror to those who are fine and base (DL 2.33/ Stob. 2.31.98); his saying that others live to eat but he eats to live (DL 2.34/ Stob. 3.17.21); his rejection of Lysias' defense speech (DL 2.40/ Stob. 3.7.74); and three episodes with Xanthippe (DL 2.36–7/ Stob. 3.3.50 and 3.17.16). The Lysias and Xanthippe episodes will be discussed below.

10 See Piccione 1994, 203.

Anthology, and not from passages spoken by Socrates or about him¹¹). His material on Socrates is worth investigating for what it might yield concerning the contributions of the minor Socratics—Aeschines, Antisthenes, Aristippus, Euclides, and Phaedo (the five most important, according to Diogenes Laertius 2.47)—to the voice of Socrates in post-classical discourse. With the exception of Phaedo, each of these is cited directly in the *lemmata* of Stobaeus, up to 18 times.¹² Especially the eight prose anecdotes—or episodes and speeches, as we shall call them¹³—that consist or culminate in a saying of Socrates, those written in fuller form than the pithy *apophthegmata* constituting most of the material in this and other anthologies, can be examined for their characterization of Socrates and signs of their tradition. Stobaeus did not compose his own prose, as far as we know, but only selected passages from pre-existing texts: hence each of these texts had an author, whether or not we can assign a name, date, or philosophical orientation. It would be difficult to prove that any extended speech attributed to Socrates in Stobaeus is the direct composition of a minor Socratic of the first generation, given that any account of how Stobaeus acquired such texts will be murky: more likely authors are Imperial-period writers like Aelian or, in one case, a Neoplatonic writer. Yet the *Anthology* does contain at least three otherwise unknown passages plausibly from the first-generation Socratic literature: an extended prose passage commonly accepted as a direct excerpt from Aeschines' *Miltiades* (Stob. 2.31.23 = *SSR* VI A 77); the only surviving attribution to Euclides that could be an excerpt (Stob. 3.6.63 = *SSR* II A 11); and a lengthy excerpt lemmatized

11 Strepsiades is quoted briefly at 4.15.12 (in the chapter "Praise of Farming"), and Just Speech is quoted at length at 2.31.12 (in the chapter "On Education and Upbringing").

12 Aeschines is cited in the Stobaeian *lemmata* four times, Antisthenes eighteen times, Aristippus ten times, and Euclides three times. Phaedo, like Simmias and Cebes, is named in Stobaeus only as a character in Plato's *Phaedo*, which is excerpted more than twelve times. Of the other first-generation Socratics treated by Diogenes Laertius, only Simon is cited in the *lemmata*, one time from a pseudonymous epistle to Aristippus. Certain successors of the first generation are also cited in the *lemmata*: Stilpo one time, Menedemus one time, Theodorus two times. Of the Cynics, Diogenes is cited 80 times, Crates nine times, Monimus two times, and Metrocles one time. Passages of Teles, Musonius, and others that include these names have not been included in this count.

13 The term "episode" rather than "anecdote" is used below for the longer excerpts featuring Socrates that contain dialogue or detailed setting, on the assumption that everything Stobaeus includes was previously "published" in some way. The etymological sense of the Greek term "anecdote" (ἀνέκδοτον) is the negation of "publication" (ἐκδοσις), i.e., "unpublished material." An "episode" (ἐπεισόδιον), by contrast, is an added or parenthetical narrative, detached from the major narrative of the text. Aelian's *Various History*, one representative of the kind of literature from which Stobaeus clearly drew the material in question, consists of episodes in this sense.

as Xenophon's *On Theognis*, a title otherwise unattested, which seems to come from the Socratic circle if not from Xenophon (Stob. 4.29.53).¹⁴ The fact that the minor Socratics' sayings were transmitted in the tradition Stobaeus received raises the possibility that Stobaeus' intermediate sources, works to be discussed briefly below, integrated writings from the minor Socratics into their images of Socrates.

Consistently with the hypothesis of a third Socrates, not Plato's, not Xenophon's, but the image of another Socrates, the *Anthology* regularly distinguishes the statements of unembedded Socrates, as we shall call him, from the statements of Plato and Xenophon, even when the Platonic and Xenophontic excerpts quoted consist largely in statements by their character Socrates. The *Anthology* treats other legendary authorities differently: numerous sayings lemmatized as Diogenes of Sinope are excerpts from Dio Chrysostom's orations,¹⁵ and numerous sayings lemmatized as wisdom of kings and statesmen are excerpts from pseudo-Plutarch's *Sayings of Kings and Commanders*. Of course, this difference must be the product of Stobaeus' pre-existing materials, not Stobaeus' own decisions. But in Diogenes Laertius 2.29, for example, stories of Socrates are reduced from texts by Plato and Xenophon and cited as such. Instead of excerpts or recognizable reductions from Plato and Xenophon, Stobaeus' entries usually present unembedded Socrates speaking on topics and in situations unknown from texts of Plato and Xenophon. In some chapters, such as chapter 3.9 "On Justice" and chapter 4.28 "On Household Management," it appears that excerpts from Plato and Xenophon are sufficient to capture the Socratic contribution to the topic at hand; in other cases, such as chapter 3.1 "On Virtue" and chapter 4.1 "On Government," it appears that unembedded Socrates has been added to the series of experts to emphasize the Socratic importance of a theme beyond its coverage by Plato and Xenophon.

When we pursue these reasons for caring about the image of Socrates in Stobaeus, we retrieve an implied view of Socrates as a skeptic in the fields of physics and logic, an earnest ethicist who is more interested in general than particular questions and most interested in topics connected with the virtues of intelligence and self-control, a moderate but not extreme social critic, and

14 Commentators are often content to attribute the passage to Xenophon, despite problems such as the unknown title and stylistic deviations from Xenophon's prose. See recently Lane Fox 2000, 46, who places it in the Socratic circle.

15 See Fuentes González 2011, 405–7; Hense 1916, col. 2571. Stobaeus probably found this material in already excerpted form and did not omit the mediating author himself—for he occasionally preserves information about a mediating author, such as Theodorus the epitomizer of Teles (Stob. 2.15.47).

a political citizen. Some characteristics connect him to the Cynics, with whom he is often aligned in the ordering of Stobaeus' entries, and with whom some scholars have compared him.¹⁶ Yet overall he is different from the Cynics: in Book 4 on politics, Stobaeus' Socrates offers cautiously positive evaluation of external assets such as status as a political citizen and wealth, the latter in juxtaposition with Diogenes of Sinope's full rejection of its value. One of his repeated analogies, the good life as the road of a traveler, casts its terms in an anti-Cynic way by advocating for the easy road. While much of the Socratic material in the *Anthology*, especially the longer anonymous excerpts, is consistent with what we know of Antisthenes, it appears that Stobaeus has constructed a Socrates more supportive of social convention through the medium of his systematic matrix of philosophy.

1 Survey of Stobaeus' Socratic Statements

The *Anthology's* representation of unembedded Socrates is slight by gross quantitative measure: only 142 of the 5,998 preserved entries are lemmatized as Socrates' statements, and these very short.¹⁷ Three additional statements of Socrates appear within doxographical excerpts attributed to Aëtius and Arius Didymus in the first and second books, and these, because they are included in *SSR* and seem to offer in unresolved form the same kind of material as the strictly unembedded attributions to Socrates, are included in the following discussion. A third set of items is also appropriate to include, and also partially included in *SSR*, five passages that open with the name of Socrates or focus on an utterance of his, although the Stobaeus *lemma* attributes the text to an intermediate author, Arrian (Epictetus), Hierocles, or Aelian. Excluded from this augmented group are the numerous excerpts from Plato and Xenophon that report speech of Socrates but are recognized by Stobaeus as excerpts from Plato or Xenophon, not Socrates, as well as excerpts from later writers (Teles,

16 Hense, in the notes to his edition of Stobaeus' Books 3 and 4 (reprinted in *SSR*), proposes Cynic or Cynico-Stoic backgrounds for six sayings of Socrates (3.1.74, 3.3.61, 3.4.59, 3.15.8, 3.22.35, 4.15.16), whereas he proposes no other background influence more than once. Joël 1893–1901, 2.322 n. 1, proposed a Cynic background in chapter 2.31, and Weber 1887, 256 (cited by Hense), noted a Cynic flavor in 4.15.16.

17 The average length of the 14 Socratic sayings in Stobaeus' chapters 3.10–16, for example, is 12.5 words. The longest items, to be discussed below as episodes and speeches, are 74, 78, and 99 words long.

Sotades,¹⁸ Musonius, Epictetus, Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom, Favorinus, Juncus,¹⁹ Aelian, Iamblicus, and Themistius) that mention Socrates but do not purport to quote him or provide a frame for something he said.

A list of Stobaeus' 142 lemmatized Socratic statements, augmented with the eight items as described, for a total of 150, appears in the attached appendix. This list is closely comparable with the 144 entries in *SSR*, I C 181–324.²⁰ For convenience of discussion and reference, the appendix provides the Stobaeian intertitle²¹ for each chapter that contains at least one Socratic saying, the *SSR* number of each saying, the word length, a classification of each saying under one of nine form-based headings to be discussed next, the verbal marker that largely determines the formal classification, and the theme or message of the saying, with extra detail provided for those sayings that are classified as analogies, by far the largest class.

1.1 *Forms of Socratic Excerpt in the Anthology*

The 142 entries of unembedded Socrates, those lemmatized “from Socrates,” are best approached through subsets based on form.²² Although it is true that the

18 Sotades was a poet of the third century BCE. He is credited with the only reference to Socrates in verse form (4.34.8) in Stobaeus' *Anthology*.

19 Juncus was a Roman senator of the early second century CE, author of a text *On Old Age* that Stobaeus excerpts four times. His writings are otherwise unknown. See Goulet 1989, 980–1.

20 Of the 144 items in the *SSR* list, five belong to the two extra sets identified here: three (I C 181, 182, 185) are opinions of Socrates cited within doxographical passages attributed to Aëtius or Didymus, and two (I C 297 and 311) are embedded in passages from Hierocles and Arrian (Epictetus), respectively. Three passages should be added to the *SSR*'s basic set: Stob. 2.31.85 and 3.4.84 are near duplicates of 2.31.53 = I C 191 and 2.31.46 = I C 190, respectively; and 3.17.16 is catalogued in the *SSR* collection as I C 61 (attributed to Aelian), although its *lemma* in Stobaeus refers to Socrates, not Aelian: the authorship of Aelian was discovered by editors. Three additional passages attributed by Stobaeus to Aelian should be included in the augmented set insofar as they, like I C 297 and 311, are essentially statements of Socrates: Stob. 2.31.38 and 4.55.10 (both fragments of Aelian not included in *SSR* at all) and 3.22.33 = I C 34. Giannantoni plausibly accepts editors' attribution of series of unattributed sayings to Socrates on the basis of sequence in Stobaeus, that is, assumption that the frequent *lemma* “from the same” is sometimes omitted. This issue affects 32 items in 10 series or pairs, including 3 long series (3.1.86–90, 3.1.187–190, 3.4.56–65).

21 Searby 2011 uses the term “intertitles” for Stobaeus' chapter titles, as known from Photius and partially in the manuscripts, and almost certainly original to Stobaeus. See also Hense 1916, col. 2552–7. Translations of the intertitles in the appendix and text are adapted from Searby 2011, 57–70.

22 For discussion of the various short-form statements transmitted in anthologies (termed variously *apophthegmata*, *gnomai*, *chreiai*, *apomnēumata*, *hypomnēumata*, as well as

same material occurs in different forms in different anthologies, distinctions of form within the material Stobaeus transmits for Socrates might point to different traditions from which Stobaeus drew. Most of Stobaeus' material takes the terse form of the clever observation without context, which will be called *apophthegmata* in a general sense, but a few sayings are contextualized in fuller prose. The former likely come from previous collections of sayings of wise men, or even collections dedicated to sayings of Socrates, whereas the latter must have been excerpted from more literary authors, even if indirectly.

The largest class is the analogy, a form noticed more than a century ago by Anton Elter. 93 of Socrates' statements, including several that are linguistically less formulaic than the majority, are analogies. The analogical form can be described as a statement using four main terms, of which two constitute the ethical point or tenor of the statement and two constitute the rhetorical vehicle.²³ For example, in the first such case to appear in the sequence of the extant *Anthology* (2.4.13), reason is superior to wealth for success in living, just as iron is superior to gold for success in warfare. The tenor compares reason to wealth, and the vehicle compares iron to gold; life is the domain of the tenor, and warfare is the domain of the vehicle. Although most of the analogies use more than four terms on the verbal level, a reduction to one ethical statement in propositional form and one metaphorical statement in propositional form is always possible. In another case (3.1.185), wealth can be used only through the tool of reasoning, just as a horse can be used only through the tool of a bridle. In a third case, attributed explicitly to "Demonax Hypsaeus and Socrates" (2.31.53), lessons (*mathēmata*) are the proper adornment for souls, just as dedications are for city-states. Such analogical structure is also embedded in anecdotes and *apophthegmata* that are not so bluntly antithetical. In one case (2.31.46), Socrates sees a wealthy person who is uneducated and calls him a golden statue: here, wealth is like the external gilding; education, by implication, is the fabric of the potential real man.

Socrates as character in Plato and Xenophon is fond of analogies and "likenesses" (*eikones*),²⁴ and so this form may take basic inspiration from the historical Socrates. But the analogies as they appear in Stobaeus are briefly stated and rhetorically formulaic, regularly using either an explicit comparative conjunction such as *kathaper* or a pair of symmetrical particles such as *men ... de ...* or *oute ... oute ...*. Hence they are artificial in literary terms, nothing like

"anecdotes" when framed with a narrative setting), see Wehrli 1973; Kindstrand 1986; and the long bibliography in Fuentes González 2016, 209.

23 The terms "tenor" and "vehicle" were coined by Richards 1936.

24 See Pl. *Resp.* 487e4–488a2; Xen. *Symp.* 6.8.

the examples in Plato and Xenophon: rather, they are the products of some effort to simplify and make memorable or convincing slogans from Socrates' statements. Indeed, this effort might have taken on a life of its own and departed from loyalty to Socratic statements as documented in fourth-century literature, using his name as a mere tag of authority. At least 14 of the analogies, and probably more, are from a set identified by Elter as common stock of the gnomological tradition, attributed in other manuscripts to Pythagoras and Plutarch, and apparently part of a pre-Stobaeian collection that was a common source for all surviving versions, prior to reassignment from one wise man to another.²⁵ We have no method for deciding which wise man was attributed with any of these sayings in the first edition, and for the present project this does not matter. We aim to trace the voice of Socrates in Stobaeus' *Anthology*, and according to Stobaeus Socrates was speaker of the analogies attributed to him.

If Socrates' 93 analogical statements are classified by their tenor, most can be reduced to a simple common doctrine, the promotion of reasoning and intelligence and a caution against confidence in wealth or good luck. Many (16) use a term as broad as "life" (*bios*) or "living" (*to zên*). Often the message of a Socratic analogy is only generally attached to its position within the detailed articulation of Stobaeus' intertitles, to the extent that analogies could often be interchanged. Chapter 2.4, within the logical section of the *Anthology*, has the title "On Speech and Letters," and chapter 3.1, the first in the exclusively ethical Book 3, the title "On Virtue," yet the point about the relationship between wealth and reason in Socratic statements 2.4.13 and 3.1.185 is almost the same. In chapter 2.31 "On Upbringing and Education," Socrates is the authority cited for 14 of 130 entries,²⁶ of which 12 take apophthegmatic form. The terms of the chapter title hardly occur: "upbringing" (*agôgê*) is used in one Socratic statement and "education" (*paideia*) or a cognate in six: the other five have no such term, but rather related terms like "intelligence" (*phronêsis*) or "good counsel" (*euboulia*). In chapter 3.1 "On Virtue," Socrates is the authority cited for 20 *apophthegmata* among 210 entries. Across these statements, the term "virtue" (*aretê*) occurs only once. The very general doctrine Socrates articulates in his analogies and other short forms is common to all strands of Socratic ethical tradition and indeed to all Greek tradition since Hesiod and Homer. Yet Stobaeus could have chosen not to pepper his chapters with advice from Socrates; the fact that he chose to do so implies that he wanted Socrates to speak on the issues at hand.

25 Elter 1900, 1–24.

26 On complications in the numbering in this chapter, see n. 50 below.

The second largest class of statements by unembedded Socrates are short responses to questions, usually framed by the simple narrative “Socrates, when asked (*erôtêtheis*) ... said ...” This group comprises 23 items, of which four are Socrates’ replies to requests for advice or questions about the choices of his own life, more readily classified with the material treated in the following paragraph than with the dominant kind of question and answer in Stobaeus. (An additional reply to a personal question is the main point of one of the texts from Arrian in the augmented set under study.) The other 19 answers form a cohesive group, addressing the meanings of ethical terms: six direct quasi-definitions of terms and 13 replies to what can be called questions of application, that is, indications of the extension of a given term, and so related to the quasi-definitions. This type of question and answer is consistent, in form at least, with the major kind of Socratic question according to Plato’s early works and Xenophon in *Memorabilia* 1.1.16, the “what is X?” question. The fact that in Stobaeus’ material Socrates does not ask the questions but answers them is an obvious difference; only in the longer episodes included by Stobaeus does Socrates ask some questions. Further, the accounts Socrates gives are hardly rigorous definitions that would pass muster in Plato’s dialogues, but merely accounts that allude to Socratic doctrine. For example, in the first entry classified here as a question of definition (2.31.79), Socrates is asked, “What is knowledge?” and replies, “Care of the soul.” In the first entry classified as a question of application (2.31.37), Socrates is asked, “Whom does reasoning (*logos*) most strengthen?” and replies, “Those whose practice follows on their reasoning.” Some Stobaean entries consist in double questions that request both a quasi-definition and its extension: the clearest examples are “What is intelligence?” and “Who are the intelligent?” (3.3.44), and “What is happiness?” and “Who are the happy?” (4.39.18 and 19, separately lemmatized). Socrates’ answers tend to be earnest, not tongue-in-cheek, but there are humorous replies, such as “Who among humans has regrets?” to which Socrates answers, “Those who have married” (4.22.59). Stobaeus includes Socrates’ quasi-definitions also in three instances where there is no question, and once as a second question after a question of application. In all, there are ten Socratic quasi-definitions: for knowledge (*epistêmê*), intelligence (*phronêsis*), strength (*rhômê*), self-control (*enkrateia*), noble birth (*eugeneia*), poverty (*penia*), happiness (*eudaimonia*), illness (*nosos*), jealousy (*phthonos*), and self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*), often in contexts where the queried term is in the title of the chapter.

The other short sayings of Socrates, which together number 15 (or 18, if the three unsolicited definitions are counted here), are classified in the appendix under the headings advice (3), precept (4), opinion (3), *apophthegma* (4),

and statement (1). These classifications are based largely on the verbal formulations—Socrates is said to have given advice through the verb *parainei* and stated precepts through the verb *chrê* or *dein*—and intended more as characterizations of the residue, what is left after the analogies, quasi-definitions, and longer episodes and speeches are separated, than as important positive categories. These forms also occur in other gnomological literature, and four of the eight texts added to the set under study—statements of Socrates embedded in texts from Aëtius, Didymus, and Hierocles—are classified as three additional opinions and one additional *apophthegma*. The five *apophthegmata* share the trait of word play or verbal reversal as well as antithesis, which also characterizes the analogies. For example, when chastised for learning lyre-playing in old age, Socrates says, “Better to be a late learner than a non-learner” (3.29.68).²⁷ In a quip that has the distinction of being the most widely attested Socratic saying included by Stobaeus,²⁸ under the chapter on self-control Socrates is asked in what respect he differs most from other humans, and he replies, “To the extent that the others live so that they can eat, but I eat so that I can live” (3.17.21). The statements classified as opinions demonstrate no outstanding rhetorical trait and could be shorter versions of what has been classified as episodes and speeches. The lone item classified as a statement (4.4.74), finally, is a five-word reply of Socrates to the instigation of an unspecified interlocutor, alike in this way to the *apophthegmata*; but the absence of joking or word play and the gravity of the topic—the timely burial of a son—differentiate this item from those classified as *apophthegmata* specifically. In what follows, the term *apophthegma* will be used on a general level, to cover all the 134 short sayings of Socrates, in differentiation from the eight longer texts called speeches and episodes. There are two “short” sayings (the advice in 2.31.54 and the analogy in 4.29.23) that by word count are longer than the shortest of the episodes (3.3.50); but apart from these cases, the classification of passages by form corresponds well to their grouping by word length.

Eight remaining items (or eleven, when two passages with the *lemma* from Aelian and one from Arrian/Epictetus are included in the count) can be approached as passages of literary prose, which have been excerpted from texts composed by authors whose names we might know.²⁹ To be sure,

27 When the same episode is related in Diogenes Laertius 2.32, there is no word play or antithesis, but Socrates says, “It is nothing strange to learn well what one does not know.”

28 Parallels in six sources are listed in SSR 1 C 157.

29 The six most interesting are passages of 30 words or more that lack the tight antithetical style of most *apophthegmata*: 2.31.101, 2.31.102, 3.7.56, 3.23.8, 4.15.16, and 4.31.90. A seventh item, 3.17.16, identified by editors as Ael. VH 9.29, carries a *lemma* in Stobaean manuscripts

Stobaeus contains text by authors whose names we would not know if he had not preserved them, and it will be difficult to prove definite authorship of these longer texts. Such proof will not be attempted here. Rather, the representations of Socrates in these passages classified as episodes (5) and speeches (3) can be examined more closely than is possible in the very short texts discussed above for indications of one or another kind of Socratic heritage. Half are episodes known also from Diogenes Laertius in different versions—interactions with Xanthippe (3.3.50 and 3.17.16), the rejection of Lysias' defense speech (3.7.56), and the conversion of Xenophon to philosophy (2.31.101)—but the other half are not: a rejection of teaching style in the Academy (2.31.102), a colorful claim that everyone classifies him- or herself as intelligent and just (3.23.8), an etymological interpretation of the horn of plenty (4.15.16), and an argument that wealth cannot be enjoyed (4.31.90), which has its own briefer parallels in the *Gnomologium Vaticanum* and in Plutarch.

1.2 *Some Apparent Provenances of Stobaeus' Socratic Sayings*

On the assumptions that Socrates wrote nothing and Stobaeus fabricated nothing but only excerpted, every statement attributed to Socrates has at least one mediating author, Stobaeus' direct source. We assume here that every entry in Stobaeus' anthology is excerpted from previous literature, whether that be literature from the classical period, such as Plato's dialogues, or post-classical literature that itself reduces, expands, or otherwise rewrites literature from the classical period. All literature that presents a speaking Socrates either was composed in the classical period or purports somehow to imitate or recreate literature of the classical period. Gnomological collections that pre-existed Stobaeus, whatever they looked like, are literature in this sense.

Several of the authors Stobaeus must have used as his direct sources for short Socratic sayings can be named, tentatively, from the very *lemmata* in Stobaeus. A certain Aristonymus author of the *Tomaria*, a title that likely indicates abridgements or excerpts, and a certain Demonax Hypsaeus, cited without title, are identified in the *lemmata* (both in chapter 2.31) as co-authors with Socrates of their statements. In chapter 4.31, nearly identical statements are attributed in close proximity to Socrates (4.31.107), then Aristonymus (4.31.111). Errors of transmission likely explain how Socrates, originally named as one authority

saying only "from Socrates." An eighth item, 3.3.50, where the narrative is brief and the Socratic saying terse, is included in this category for the sake of consistent distinction from the analogies, questions, and precepts, etc., classified above. Three of the attributed passages (3.22.33 = Aelian 3.28, 4.33.28 = Arrian (Epictetus) fragment, and 4.55.10 = Aelian fragment) are comparanda for the unattributed passages, as they are of the same kind.

cited within a collection attributed to Aristonymus or Demonax, came to be identified as co-author of the collection.³⁰ Further, the figures Ariston, author of a collection called *Homoiomata* that was apparently a collection of analogies, Serenus, author of a collection called *Apomnemonemata* that were apparently anecdotes about philosophers, and Dio, author of a collection of *Chreiai* or useful sayings, are cited repeatedly amid lists of short sayings of intellectual authorities. Aristotle is also cited from a work called *Chreiai*, whose excerpts, like those of Serenus and Dio, are less rhetorically formulaic and more prosaic than the Socratic analogies. Aristonymus' *Tomaria* is mentioned a total of eighteen times in Stobaeus' anthology, and nearly all cases are in close proximity to a saying attributed to Socrates: by this measure, Aristonymus counts as the most likely definite source for Socratic material. But the collection attributed to each of these six authors is cited by title at least once in proximity to a Socratic *apophthegma*, and in one case where Aristonymus is cited (3.13.41), citations of Ariston, Dio, and Serenus are nearly adjacent, whereas in another case (3.21.7), citation of Demonax is nearly adjacent. It turns out, too, that the co-authored statements attributed to Demonax and Socrates in 2.31.56 and to Aristonymus and Socrates in 2.31.85 are nearly the same, an analogy between the adornments proper to city versus soul. Hence, these works may have shared content, and some may have been different versions of the same collection. Unfortunately, we have no information external to Stobaeus about the identity or date of Aristonymus, which could be a pseudonym. Dio is probably Dio Chrysostom, who is used widely by Stobaeus; the name Serenus points to a Roman figure most probably from the second century CE;³¹ and Demonax may be the same figure Lucian uses in his text *Demonax*, whether a historical or fictive neo-Socratic philosopher. Hence the second century CE is a plausible period for creation of most of the collections Stobaeus used. Ariston, by contrast, seems to be associated with the earlier Stoic Ariston of Chios, from the third century BCE, but it may be that his name was used for a collection that developed over a long time and possibly even gave rise to the *Tomaria* of Aristonymus, cited often in close proximity to Ariston's *Homoiomata*.³² Aristotle's *Chreiai*, similarly, could be a collection started in Aristotle's own school, in the late fourth century BCE.

It is likely that collections such as these, however many there were, were Stobaeus' source for the majority of his statements of Socrates, and it appears

30 Hense 1916, col. 2572.

31 See Fuentes González 2011, 408, and 2016, 208–11.

32 On Ariston of Chios in Stobaeus, see Ranocchia 2011. On the association between Aristonymus and Ariston, see, in summary, Goulet 1989, 405.

that he used them throughout his ethical and political chapters (the end of Book 2, and Books 3 and 4) in a fairly even way. Such sources must have presented each *apophthegma* Stobaeus uses within a longer list, whether a list of only Socratic *apophthegmata*, as might plausibly be attributed to Aristonymus or Demonax, or a list of *apophthegmata* from various authorities, on the pattern of the collected utterances of the Seven Wise Men, such as the list attributed to Demetrius of Phaleron in Stobaeus 3.1.172.³³ In many cases, Stobaeus apparently presents multiple *apophthegmata* of Socrates as a list, in sequences up to eleven utterances (3.4.55–65).³⁴ Hence it is plausible that Stobaeus reproduces the collection of *apophthegmata* as he found it in his source, possibly with omissions or rearrangements. Such omissions and rearrangements of a source text have been detected in the chapters of Stobaeus' first book on physics, where the *Placita* of pseudo-Plutarch are available for comparison.³⁵ In a second set of cases, a single utterance of Socrates appears within a series of comparable utterances from other authoritative figures in the field of ethics, such as Pythagoras and Democritus, or even a series featuring members of the Seven Wise Men, such as Chilon, Bias, and Cleobulus, in 3.1.20–23. Several such series (e.g., 3.14.14–24) feature Cynic authorities, namely, Antisthenes, Diogenes of Sinope, and Crates. When such sequences appear repeatedly, as both these kinds do, we can assume that Socrates' sayings were transmitted to Stobaeus within collections of sayings of the Wise Men or sayings of the Cynics (who might have been a sub-class of the Wise Men). Yet statements of Socrates sometimes appear outside any sequence of *apophthegmata*, and flanked on both sides by excerpts from continuous prose. Such cases, to be discussed below, show that Stobaeus took excerpts out of the collections of apophthegmatic statements he used, just as he took excerpts from continuous prose such as Plato's dialogues.

The level of open creativity practiced by authors of short formulaic statements like Aristonymus appears to be high, since the terse *apophthegmata* fit patterns shared among themselves and with similar sayings attributed to others, rather than the overall style of the first-generation Socratic literature. For the longer passages, matters are less simple. On the assumption that

33 The sayings of the Seven Wise Men are plausibly posited as the origin of all anthologies of philosophical sayings. See Kindstrand 1986.

34 Attribution of these sequences to Socrates is sometimes implicit (see n. 20). Moreover, in some chapters the manuscripts disagree on the ordering of short statements, and it is possible that copyists are responsible for collecting sayings by the same authority into a sequence. This explanation is simpler than the reverse, that copyists are responsible for dispersing sayings by the same authority to different parts of the chapter.

35 See Gourinat 2011, 146–7 and 191–201.

stories and sayings of Socrates were shaped through multiple generations of authorship, many sayings of Socrates have at least two mediating authors, one (like Plato or Xenophon) who claimed enough first-hand understanding of Socrates to attribute statements to him and a second (like a composer of *apophthegmata*, or Epictetus, Aelian, or Lucian) who condensed or expanded these statements into new form, with a striking reduction or twist. The outstanding question is the degree to which secondary authors practiced open creation of Socratic statements, hence taking the position of primary authors. Clearly allegations of forgery were made, for example, against Pasiphon the Eretrian (c. 339–265 BCE), who lived three to four generations after Socrates (DL 2.61),³⁶ and this probably means that writers in the early Hellenistic period continued to reinvent Socrates as though they had first-hand authority to do so. But by the mid-second century BCE Panaetius (c. 185–110 BCE) undertook to sort the “authentic” accounts of Socrates from a body of other accounts, and the criterion for sorting according to Panaetius was authorship by a small set of original disciples: Plato, Xenophon, Antisthenes, and Aeschines (DL 2.64). The position of Panaetius does not imply that open creativity concerning Socrates ceased around 150 BCE or that stories and sayings first written up by those outside Panaetius’ canon were excluded from later traditions. But given the role of philosophical schools in inspiring creative engagement with the philosophical tradition, and given the unrivaled position of the Stoa in keeping alive the Socratic doctrine of the supremacy and incommensurability of virtue in all realms of human endeavor, the appearance we receive that after Panaetius Socrates was treated by the best writers as a character whose words and traits were fixed in the texts of Plato, Xenophon, and other first-hand authorities seems likely to be accurate. Cicero surely treats Socrates this way. The pseudepigraphic epistles of Socrates and the Socratics, composed in the three centuries after Panaetius, recognizably rewrite Xenophon and Plato.³⁷ Even Lucian and Dio Chrysostom, authors of the Second Sophistic who stand out for their creative fabrication of stories about figures such as Socrates and Diogenes of Sinope,³⁸ base their embellishments on features of the subject already known to their audience from old sources. Plato and Xenophon are very likely among the ultimate sources of much material about Socrates in Stobaeus, as they are for Diogenes Laertius and the *Suda*, but less

36 See a condensed discussion of this much disputed topic in Prince 2015, 165–7.

37 On the Socratic epistles generally, see Köhler 1928, 4–5. Her text of each letter is annotated with references to older material, which includes Aristotle as well as Plato and Xenophon.

38 See von Fritz 1926, 71–97, for discussion of Dio’s powers in fabrication, in this case of the adventures and words of Diogenes of Sinope.

frequently, as it appears.³⁹ When it comes to material about Socrates that is not discernibly derived from Plato and Xenophon, whether in Stobaeus or in any of these other late texts, the possibility lies open that works no longer surviving by other first-generation Socratics were the basic inspiration, in parallel to Plato and Xenophon. In each case, this possibility must be weighed against our understanding of the creative options and motivations of other writers in the chain of transmission. When these writers are anonymous, as they are in Stobaeus, the problem of distinguishing old lore from new fiction seems nearly intractable; but progress can start only when we take a closer look at what Stobaeus transmits.

2 Socratic Statements in Stobaeus' Matrix of Intertitles

The value of most statements of Socrates in Stobaeus' *Anthology* does not, by and large, lie in their internal message, for the messages are largely variations on the basic Socratic points that virtue requires knowledge and effort, luxury and comfort are not worthy pursuits, and good luck cannot be trusted. These sayings are not even distinctly Socratic. Their meaning is rather to be measured by their placement within the philosophical matrix, so to speak, that is constituted by Stobaeus' intertitles. The chapters in which Socrates' statements appear, their position in the frequently antithetical structure within and between the chapters, and their position in the hierarchy of specificity that appears to govern the sequences in the third and fourth books shed light on the philosophical identity of Stobaeus' Socrates, that is, the identity Stobaeus implicitly asserted. Given that the short Socratic statements in the *Anthology* function more often as Socrates' endorsement of a topic than as substantive contributions to discussion, the oddities in the ways Socrates is used probably point to Stobaeus' own philosophical proclivities. In general, the longer passages, to be discussed separately in section 3, contribute more substantially to the topics at hand.

Stobaeus composed an anthology without composing his own prose, as far as we can tell. But he asserted a role as author by selecting and arranging the excerpts he included. Critics beginning with Hense agree that the chapter titles, *lemmata*, and major ordering should be attributed to Stobaeus, with the

39 Compare Giannantoni 1990, 1.105–127 (*SSR* I C 181–324), where footnotes to parallel texts point foremost to broadly thematic parallels in Xenophon and more rarely Plato. Some particular parallels will be discussed below, and further study will establish more, but the majority of Stobaeus' material seems different.

exception of minor variants of ordering, abbreviation, and accretion in the manuscripts.⁴⁰ In some cases, it appears that Stobaeus abridged a preexisting text by selecting favorite passages and placing them in order within one of his chapters.⁴¹ In other cases, he divided a text by topic and dispersed it across sequential chapters, with the apparent aim of including the text's voice where it was relevant.⁴² His inclusion of Socrates' statements in the *Anthology* apparently followed the same kinds of principles. In a few chapters, Socrates is represented in three, seven, or up to eleven sequential entries; similarly, he appears amid a series of rhetorically homogeneous sayings attributed to various wise men that Stobaeus might have found collected in a single source. In other areas of the *Anthology*, one Socratic saying appears outside any list of homogeneous items, but within a sequence of longer excerpts from texts Stobaeus typically quotes in extended form, such as Plato, Xenophon, and Epictetus. For example, in chapter 2.4.12–14, two *apophthegmata* of Socrates together with one *apophthegma* of Democritus are preceded by a short excerpt from Isocrates' *Evagoras* (which Stobaeus otherwise excerpts twelve times) and followed by five long excerpts from Plato's *Philebus*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Phaedrus*, which close the chapter. In these cases at least, Stobaeus must have been operating independently from any source text and has chosen to represent the voice of Socrates within a sequence of excerpts he designed himself. It is not out of the question that Stobaeus designed his own sequences all the time. From such cases we can surmise that Stobaeus decided to include Socrates in particular as a figure of authority on the topic of the chapter and selected an *apophthegma* that he found pertinent to the topic (even if we are sometimes left to wonder about its pertinence).

As Photius saw, the *Anthology* follows the post-Hellenistic scheme of physics (Book 1, in 60 chapters), logic (Book 2, chapters 1–6), and ethics (Book 2, chapters 7–46, and Books 3 and 4, in 42 and 58 chapters, respectively).⁴³ Not

40 The two opening chapters that have been lost might have included passages of Stobaeus' own prose. It has been proposed that the narrator's voice in chapter 2.7, attributed by most scholars to Arius Didymus, is really Stobaeus, but this is an outlying view: see discussion in Kahn 1983. Modern scholars of Stobaeus generally attribute him with authorship consisting in his selections and arrangements. See, e.g., Searby 2011, 33–40; Giovacchini 2011, 615–18.

41 For cases from Plutarch and Xenophon, see Piccione 1998. For example, Plutarch's *On Exile* is abridged in 3.40.3–5, in seven sequential excerpts.

42 For Plato, see Curnis 2011, 103–12.

43 Photius (codex 167) divides the two-volume work he has read into parts he calls φυσικόν, λογικόν, and ἠθικόν (Henry 1960, 2.149.25–7). The extreme disproportion between the “logical” part in six chapters and the ethical part in 140 chapters, as well oddities within the “logical” part, will be treated below.

surprisingly, Socrates appears largely but not exclusively in the ethical chapters, but these are finely subdivided in Stobaeus' work through a hierarchy of antithetical theses and thereby reach into fields in politics and lifestyle at a level of detail like the Socratic realm presented by Xenophon, who transmits Socratic advice for living well in the second and third books of the *Memorabilia* and in the *Oeconomicus*, but with an even more practical and conventional orientation. For example, Socrates is invoked in favor of farming at Stob. 4.15.16, a view he promotes also in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* (6.8). Whereas in Xenophon the framework is a theoretical discussion of what is useful, and for detailed expertise Socrates appeals to the authority of Ischomachus, in Stobaeus Socrates speaks straight out on the way a literary name endorses the value of hard work in farming.

In this section we survey the *Anthology* in the order of its arrangement, on the hypothesis that Stobaeus arranged it as it appears. We selectively examine chapters where unembedded Socrates is especially prominent and some chapters where his absence is surprising. The result is a range of surprises. First, Socrates is hardly dogmatic. He is virtually absent from the doxographic passages assigned by Diels to Aëtius or Arius Didymus, which dominate Stobaeus' Book 1 and parts of Book 2, and when he appears there he is nearly skeptical. Many of the separated *apophthegmata* attributed to Socrates in the ethical chapters have dogmatic tones, but not often in resolution of any controversy: Socrates provides a point of view on various matters more often than he delivers a final statement. Presentation of opinions on all sides of a topic, and mixture of various views, is a hallmark of Stobaeus' collection and arguably of gnomological collections in general.⁴⁴ Second, in certain sets of chapters on social assets in the fourth book, 4.29–30 on the inborn nature of nobility and 4.31–33 on the value of wealth, Socrates is presented as a more moderate and even equivocal voice than one might expect from his radical and principled stances in texts like Plato's *Apology* and *Crito* and as well as some *apophthegmata* appearing elsewhere in the *Anthology*. Other speakers, such as Diogenes of Sinope and Monimus, reject more flatly the value of inherited nobility and wealth, as Socrates does in Diogenes Laertius 2.31. Third, some of Stobaeus' content reflects controversy between the Socratic traditions. Censure of Xenophon's mercantile tendencies and also Plato's comprehensive curriculum in the Academy appears in sequential episodes in chapter 2.31. Elsewhere, individual sayings of Socrates are both consistent and inconsistent with Cynicism, and when such sayings are immediately juxtaposed, as in

44 Hense 1916, col. 2560, citing Diels. Photius, too, noted the variety in Stobaeus' juxtapositions.

chapter 3.5 “On Temperance,” it appears that Stobaeus accentuates the controversy. Fourth and finally, in the section of the *Anthology* dealing most closely with government and politics, chapters 4.1–8, the presence of Socrates appears different, insofar as the Socratic material Stobaeus uses is different from what appears through the remainder of the work. If we attribute authorial intention to these surprising features of Socrates’ image in the *Anthology*, we see Stobaeus making space for and asserting his own character of Socrates, and this Socrates endorses many of the same positions that the *Anthology* endorses by virtue of its intertitles and their ordering.

2.1 *Socrates in Books 1 and 2*

Unembedded Socrates appears only once in what survives of Stobaeus’ entire Book 1, on natural philosophy, in its first chapter, on divine providence, within a passage Diels attributed to his hypothetical Aëtius (1.1.29),⁴⁵ where Socrates replies to the question “What is a god?” with the response, “The deathless and eternal.” His position is more systematically catalogued and emphatically placed in the final excerpt from the chapter, from Epictetus’ *Discourses* 1.12.1–7 (1.1.40), where he is classified with Homer as spokesman for the fifth and strongest type of theist position, that the gods exist, they have foreknowledge, and they care for humans individually rather than collectively. Otherwise in the whole of Book 1, Socrates’ name is mentioned only within (numerous) excerpts from Plato’s *Symposium*, *Philebus*, *Theaetetus*, *Phaedo*, and *Phaedrus*. Although the *Phaedo*’s statements about soul appearing extensively in chapter 1.49 “On Soul” are largely quotations from Plato’s character Socrates (twelve excerpts amounting to about 21 Stephanus pages), Stobaeus never matches these with any direct statement from unembedded Socrates.

Stobaeus’ second book has the odd trait that it begins with six chapters on logic, then in chapter 2.7 introduces the “ethical form of philosophy,” which continues for the 39 additional chapters of the book, most of these now known by title only. From the intertitles themselves, it appears that Stobaeus was reluctant to attribute much power to humans’ capacity to use reasoning, that is, logic, to achieve knowledge of the truth. The book begins with the intertitle “On the interpretation of divine signs, and that the truth of intelligible objects in their essence cannot be grasped by humans,” where Socrates is cited within

45 For recent criticism of Diels’ hypotheses about Aëtius and Didymus, see Gourinat 2011. The many controversies concern the identities of the doxographers, the distinctions among them, and the extent of their responsibility for the content of Stobaeus’ chapters. The entries 1.1.29 and 2.7.3 where Socrates is cited are within doxographical passages, whoever the author.

a doxographical extract attributed in the manuscript *lemma* to Didymus' *On Sects*⁴⁶ for the most skeptical kind of position, which he shares with Pyrrho: "Philosophy is a hunt and desire for the truth. Of those who practiced philosophy, some say they have found the object of hunt, such as Epicurus and the Stoics; others say they are still seeing the peak, as though it is somewhere with the gods, and as though wisdom is not a human matter: Socrates and Pyrrho spoke in this way" (2.1.18). The chapter, which contains 33 extracts in total, includes two passages from Xenophon where Socrates is said to reject theoretical inquiry into matters beyond human capacity to know, *Memorabilia* 1.1.11–14 (= Stob. 2.1.30) and a pseudepigraphical letter to Aeschines (= Stob. 2.1.29).

After this skeptical opening chapter, where Socrates' voice is outstanding in its position although not its frequency, follows a chapter "On Dialectic" that is the first to be clearly bifurcated into oppositional positions, a series of seven extracts in promotion of dialectic (2.2.1–7) and a longer series "To the contrary" (2.2.8–25).⁴⁷ Here Stobaeus quotes two passages from Plato's *Republic* and one from *Phaedrus* in promotion of dialectic, then four neo-Pythagorean and Neoplatonic passages (from Pseudo-Archytas and letters of Iamblichus) also in support, but then in the section "to the contrary" turns to a series of three poetic excerpts and fifteen short prose excerpts, including two from Plato's *Sophist* and *Phaedo* in final position, that equate dialectic to eristic quibbling. Although unembedded Socrates is never cited, the Platonic statements both for and against dialectic are his. But more importantly, Stobaeus himself seems to favor the eristic interpretation, since the remaining four chapters of the "logical" section in his *Anthology* turn to "On Rhetoric" (2.3), "On Speech and Letters" (2.4), "On Poetry" (2.5), and "On the Style of the Ancients" (2.6), topics that delve increasingly into more indeterminate forms of language and, apparently, their aesthetic qualities. (The intertitles are preserved only by Photius, not in the manuscripts of Stobaeus, and hardly any content from chapters 2.3, 2.5 and 2.6 survives.)

In his only appearances in the logical section of the Book 2, unembedded Socrates speaks twice in succession in chapter 2.4 "On Speech and Letters," entries 13 and 14 of 19 total. Both statements are analogical in form. According to the first (2.4.13), "In war iron is better than gold for security, and in life speech (*logos*) is better than wealth." According to the second (2.4.14), "Speech (*logos*) like a good modeler (*plastês*) dresses the soul in a fine shape." Both these

46 Technically, the *lemma* is attached to the previous extract, 2.1.17, and 2.1.18 is continuous.

47 Stobaeus might take the antithetical structure, which recurs in many of the chapters in Book 4, from the tradition of rhetorical exercises: see Searby 2011, 34.

statements conceive of *logos* in the rhetorical sense of linguistic articulation, not the philosophical sense of reasoning formally and with rigor. They stand at a transition point in the chapter, in a cluster with one statement from Democritus (“Speech [*logos*] is a strong element for persuasion,” Stob. 2.4.12), that separates the ten opening poetic excerpts plus one short excerpt from Isocrates’ *Evagoras* (§73), celebrating the fine way well-crafted *logos* can commemorate deeds and thought, from the far longer concluding excerpts from Plato’s *Philebus* (18b–d), *Theaetetus* (202b–c), *Sophist* (261d–262e), and *Phaedrus* (274b–275d). In an apparently escalating way, like the apparent escalation of the Platonic passages, Socrates is used in a series of three *apophthegmata*, the only ones in the chapter, that introduces the properly philosophical excerpts, and all of this seems to be Stobaeus’ way of saying that the mode of philosophical discourse he accepts or promotes is the rhetorical mode, the one that favors fine articulation of important thoughts, like the *kalon schêma* provided as clothing for the soul in Socrates’ *apophthegma* of 2.4.14. The “logical” section of Stobaeus’ *Anthology* is probably so short because Stobaeus had little taste for logic. Despite the critical role of the historical Socrates in developing logic, Stobaeus uses him as a pivot for his point that rhetoric surpasses logic.

Chapter 2.7 opens the ethical section of Book 2, as announced in its intertitle (also lacking from the manuscripts but recorded by Photius), “On the ethical form of philosophy.” The 40 chapters that round out Book 2 are the least well preserved of the whole *Anthology*: content survives for only seven of them, and this includes chapter 2.7 which, as reconstructed by Wachsmuth, consists entirely in a lengthy synthesis of Stoic and Peripatetic ethics attributed to Arius Didymus. Early in this doxographic text, Socrates’ doctrine on the end of ethics is cited, in agreement with Plato and Pythagoras, as “assimilation to god” (2.7.3–4), and this is his only appearance in the chapter. Whereas the views of Plato and Pythagoras are briefly explained, through citation of *Theaetetus* 176b and other texts, nothing further is said of Socrates’ view. The author has doubtless derived it from the Socrates character in *Theaetetus* but nevertheless maintains a distinction between Socrates and Plato. As in his two other appearances in doxographic contexts in the *Anthology* (1.1.29a and 2.1.18), Socrates’ dogma is a theist statement that apparently explains the matter at hand without need for elaboration. As it turns out, each dogmatic appearance by Socrates occurs in the first chapter of a main section of the *Anthology*, the first chapter on each physics, logic, and ethics. In each case, Socrates’ dogma nearly amounts to renunciation of the topic as philosophical terrain, that is, an area where truth can be approached through rational argument by humans.

In the remainder of the ethical chapters in Book 2, however, and throughout Books 3 and 4, Socrates makes regular appearances. Chapters 2.8 “On things

up to us,” and 2.15 “On seeming and being, and that one must not judge a man by his words but by his character, for every word is superfluous when not accompanied by deeds,” each feature one Socratic *apophthegma*, and chapter 2.31 “On Upbringing and Education,” features twelve *apophthegmata* plus three longer passages here counted as anecdotes, including one attributed by *lemma* to Aelian. Three surviving chapters of Book 2 as reconstructed by Wachsmuth lack a contribution from unembedded Socrates: 2.9 “That no one is willingly bad” (primarily about luck, rather than the thesis attributed to Socrates by Plato and Aristotle; a concluding excerpt from Musonius addresses the Socratic topic); 2.33 “That similarity of characters produces friendship”; and 2.46 “On ingratitude.” This rate of appearance by unembedded Socrates—in half of Stobaeus’ chapters—is roughly matched in the third and fourth books. The incomplete state of modern editions of Stobaeus prohibits real precision, especially in Book 2: for example, two manuscripts that Wachsmuth did not use for his reconstructions of chapters 2.31 and 2.46 contain additional short sayings of Socrates.⁴⁸

In the lengthy chapter 2.31, specially reconstructed by Wachsmuth through his analysis of a manuscript section corresponding with Stobaeus’ topic (although not attributed to Stobaeus), Socrates has an outstanding presence, as measured by quantity, quality, and placement. Unembedded Socrates accounts for nearly ten percent of the entries (though much less of the textual content). Half of the Socratic entries are analogies, but chapter 2.31 contains a broader diversity of form of Socratic statement than any other extant chapter in Stobaeus. This marked presence of Socrates probably reflects the importance of Socrates’ contribution to the topic of education, according to Stobaeus. None of the 14 items attributed to unembedded Socrates is obviously derived from a known text, and extended episodes (2.31.101 and 102) criticize Xenophon and Plato, respectively, for their way of learning. On the basis of difference from Plato, Aristotle, and Xenophon, Karl Joël proposed a Cynic source for the Socratic sayings in this chapter,⁴⁹ and his proposal can be supported from the overall content of the chapter and detail in about half of Socrates’ sayings.

The chapter contains 130 entries according to the Wachsmuth-Hense edition, but 157 excerpts (because entries 106–110, all from Plato, comprise

48 Hense 1912, 5.v–xii, proposed additional material for these chapters on the basis of discoveries by Anton Elter that post-dated publication of Wachsmuth’s second volume. Included are two short sayings of Socrates in chapter 2.46 and four additional short sayings in chapter 2.31.

49 See n. 16 above.

32 separate excerpts⁵⁰). The arrangement is Stobaeus' typical ordering: first (2.31.1–25) excerpts from poets, mostly dramatic, of usually one to three verses but including some quotations of four or more verses and one from Aristophanes' *Clouds* of 42 verses; then (2.31.27–119) short passages from prose writers, mostly philosophers, presumably excerpted from previous collections; and finally (2.31.120–130) longer prose excerpts, in this case, from Pseudo-Archytas, Iamblichus, Musonius, Theophrastus, Musonius, Xenophon, and Plato.⁵¹ Entries from Cynic and proto-Cynic authorities are especially frequent among the short prose passages: Diogenes of Sinope is credited with six statements, Antisthenes has four,⁵² and Monimus and Metrodorus are lemmatized once each. This rate of presence for Antisthenes is unmatched elsewhere in the *Anthology* (only in chapter 3.14 "On Flattery" does he appear more than once), and for Diogenes it is matched in only two other chapters, 3.6 "On Licentiousness" and 3.13 "On Frankness"; Metrodorus appears nowhere else in the extant *Anthology*. But other Socratics infrequently cited in the *Anthology* are also represented in chapter 2.31, as well as members of Plato's and Aristotle's schools and the Stoa: Aeschines' *Miltiades* is cited here, and Euclides briefly; the Academics Xenocrates, Crantor, and Acusilaus also appear, as well as the Peripatetics Theophrastus and Bion and the Stoics Zeno and Cleanthes. Democritus and Isocrates are cited repeatedly, and from the oratorical tradition Demosthenes, Antiphon, and Hyperides. The chapter overall is varied and favors Plato, who is quoted in 42 of the 134 prose passages. But signs of Cynic marking in many Socratic sayings support the possibility that the material on Socrates came from one or more collections that aligned him with the Cynics.

50 On Wachsmuth's version of chapter 2.31, see Curnis 2011, 88–93. Some passages from Plato may be expansions by a later copyist, not from Stobaeus.

51 This description is simplified for the sake of brevity: there are two short prose passages (2.31.22 and 23) among the poetic excerpts and long quotations from Plato's *Laws* and *Theages* early in the chapter (2.31.26 and 60). The 32 excerpts from Plato at 2.31.106–110 could be classified with the final passages, but 2.31.111–119 are more like 2.31.27–105. The main body of short prose passages includes externally verifiable quotations from known texts, such as Isocrates' *To Demonicus* (55 and 93), as well as extracts cited from Demonax Hypsaesus (53), Ariston's *Homoiomata* (83 and 95), Aristonymus' *Tomaria* (85), Dio's *Chreiai* (89), and Serenus (114 and 116). A certain Aristoxenus is also cited from the *Pythagorean Sayings* (119).

52 It is notable that Antisthenes is called "Antisthenes the Socratic philosopher" at 2.31.33 (his first appearance in the chapter), uniquely in the *Anthology*. Monimus, by contrast, is called "Monimus the Cynic philosopher" at 2.31.88. Neither Diogenes nor Metrodorus receives an extended identification.

The first seven Socratic sayings in the chapter are ordered among the long series of short sayings with no obvious scheme; the last seven come near the end of the short sayings, just before a long series of Platonic quotations. In the first series, Socrates compares education to a festival of the soul and notes the many “sights and sounds” (*theamata kai akousmata*) it contains (2.31.44); he compares progress toward old age to a footrace, where what would be “the prize of victory” is “the first prize in intelligence” (2.31.45); and, on seeing a wealthy uneducated man, he calls him “the golden slave” (*to chrusoun andrapodon*) (2.31.46). Detail in each of these sayings has a parallel in Antisthenes or Diogenes of Sinope. The “things worth seeing and things worth hearing” (*axiotheata kai axiakousta*) of education, especially Socratic education, are heralded in Antisthenes’ central speech in Xenophon’s *Symposium* 4.44 (*SSR* v A 82), whereas Plato’s kind of education aims to elevate the soul’s gaze beyond sights and sounds to being itself (e.g., *Resp.* 507c–509b).⁵³ The analogy in 2.31.45 is lengthy and unformulaic, by comparison with the majority in the *Anthology*, and the vocabulary used resonates with the high evaluation of effort (*ponos*) in Cynic education. Socrates says, “For those who have run the long footrace, the prize of victory lies at the finish line, and for those who have striven with zeal (*philoponêsas*in), the first prize of intelligence lies in the period of old age.” The athletic metaphor, especially in connection to Olympic events, is used by Antisthenes, and its allegorization as the struggles of life might have been an aspect of Antisthenes’ stories of Heracles.⁵⁴ The image of the golden slave, finally, is nearly the same as a saying attributed to Antisthenes and Diogenes of Sinope: Antisthenes reportedly called the wealthy and uneducated “golden sheep” (*chrusa probata*), and Diogenes allegedly called such a person “a sheep with a golden flece (*probaton chrusomallon*).⁵⁵

The next four Socratic sayings (2.31.53, 54, 79, and 85) are less clearly marked by any particular tradition. But items in the last series (2.31.98–105, except for 100) again contain details resonant with remains from Antisthenes and Diogenes. A longer excerpt (2.31.101) relates Socrates’ conversion of

53 The 17 excerpts from the *Republic* in this chapter include nothing about Plato’s ontology. Nine of the excerpts are from Books 2–4, and the eight excerpts from Books 6–7 are not technical. Only 2.31.110z (= *Resp.* 536d4–537a2) mentions dialectic, but the main point of interest seems to be a caution against using force in education in the concluding lines, 537a1–2: these three lines are duplicated at 2.31.110p.

54 In Antisthenes, see *SSR* v A 106 and 195. Funke 1970 argued that an ethical metaphor from the Olympic games in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians (9.24–7) was an image from Antisthenes, on the basis of comparison with Dio Chrysostom 8.11–35, where the speaker is Diogenes of Sinope.

55 For Antisthenes, *SSR* v A 165, and for Diogenes, *DL* 6.47. In *Gnom. Vat.* 484, Socrates, like Antisthenes, compares a wealthy uneducated man to a golden sheep.

Xenophon, an episode also narrated in Diogenes Laertius 2.48 (SSR I C 96) but not surviving independently elsewhere. The thrust of the episode is that the pre-converted Xenophon knew much about how to find commodities in the marketplace but not where to find good men (*kaloi kagathoi* in both versions), and through a series of questions Socrates traps him into this realization. The version in Stobaeus specifies Socrates' inquiries after fish and beans and in this respect appears prior to the version in Diogenes Laertius, which has reduced Socrates' interrogation to "where each of the proposed things would be bought." But the version in Diogenes includes detail about the situation that Stobaeus omits: Socrates cornered Xenophon in a narrow pathway and held out his staff without letting him pass. Each of the omitted details suggests a Cynic flavor: beans in particular are staples of the basic diet, and fish may indicate a level of luxury. At least, these everyday details are commonly mentioned in anecdotes concerning Antisthenes and Diogenes of Sinope.⁵⁶ The staff wielded by Socrates is part of the Cynic costume. Xenophon comes off well in the end because he accepts Socrates' call, but the subtle attack on his expertise in commodities and neglect of the most important knowledge also fits Cynic concerns, reflected also generally in the famous protreptic speech of Socrates as mooted in Plato's *Apology*, the *Clitophon*, and later in Epictetus and Dio Chrysostom. Aeschines is also plausible as author of this anecdote because we know he used Xenophon as a character, and we know he wrote a version of Socrates' attempt to convert Alcibiades;⁵⁷ but we have no parallel in Aeschines for concern with the marketplace. It is clear from the diverging details in the two versions of this story that the text in Stobaeus is not from the fourth century, but a later reduction parallel to the one in Diogenes Laertius.

A second longer excerpt follows in 2.31.102, a critique of the Academy (presumably Plato's Academy, through a very clear anachronism) not paralleled elsewhere. Socrates attacks *polumatheia*, obsessive learning, by comparing the mind to a farmer's orchard, where the good farmer leaves some space vacant so that each tree has room to develop its fruit, rather than causing the individual trees to kill each other off through competition. The individual trees are like the lessons (*mathēmata*) in the soul. Since Socrates' interlocutor is someone on his way to the Academy, it is clear that the anecdote attacks Plato's approach to learning, perhaps its presumption to thorough, comprehensive learning through tools like the dialectical survey which presume to account for all possibilities under a concept. The figure of the farmer Socrates uses

56 For Antisthenes, see SSR v A 100 and 172. For Diogenes, see DL 6.48, 6.57.

57 See SSR vi A 70 for Xenophon as a character in Aeschines' *Aspasia* and SSR vi A 53 for the attempted conversion of Alcibiades.

is paralleled in Plato's *Theaetetus* (in a speech by Protagoras), but also in an educational analogy attributed to Antisthenes.⁵⁸ Of course, Ischomachus, the main speaker in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, is a farmer, but the notion that free space should be left open for new thinking is hardly important there; the point is, rather, how to transmit knowledge from the head of household to the wife. The concept of free space for new thinking is comparable to the call attributed to Antisthenes for "unlearning" as the first step in education (*SSR* v A 87); and Antisthenes also emphasizes to pupils the importance of the new, which through a pun is associated with the mind (*SSR* v A 171).

The short saying of Socrates that follows at 2.31.103, marked with a *lemma* "from the same [Socrates]," uses a metaphor similar to that in 102: "Education, like a fortunate land (*eudaimôn chôra*), produces all good things." It is plausible that this unusual analogy comes from the same source as the episode of the Academy. The next two short sayings, though, are more unusual. 104 is an analogy containing a compressed allegory: "For Orestes in his madness, the story provides Electra, and for the impulse of young men, reason in accord with philosophy <provides> good council (*euboulia*) <as a force> toward apprehension (*eis antilêpsin*)."⁵⁹ 105 is another analogy: "In life, as on a long road, there must also be a decent respite (*anapausin euschêmona*) somewhere." These two analogies are the beginning of a series of nine entries in the manuscript, 2.31.104–109c, uniform in length, that lack *lemmata*. Because 106–109c (seven entries) are short quotations from Plato (*Republic*, *Laws*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Theaetetus*), Wachsmuth labeled them so in his edition. Without such labels, however, these could be read as more sayings of Socrates, as they mostly are.⁶⁰ This implies that 104 and 105 might also be short excerpts from literary texts of early origin that we cannot recognize. Although the analogical form in each case suggests an intermediate reception by a writer like of Aristonymus, there is no typical sign.

Wherever these excerpts come from, the allegorical reading of Electra as good council for Orestes⁶⁰ seems to use the traditional fiction of Aeschylus

58 Pl. *Tht.* 167b5–7; from Antisthenes, a maxim preserved on an ostrakon, a parallel to *SSR* v A 163 (= Stob. 2.31.68) not itself printed in *SSR*; see Prince 2015, 549.

59 Curnis 2011, 95–100, draws attention to the absence of *lemmata* in this series and points out that the two excerpts from *Laws*, where Socrates does not appear, are from speeches of the Athenian stranger, who could be recognized as a version of Socrates.

60 The text requires supplementation or a fuller context to make sense, and it is possible that Electra is not directly implied as equivalent to good council. See Curnis 2011, 97, who would supply "reason of older men" as the provider of good council to the young. Such a supplement lessens the allegorical use of the Orestes myth. But even Curnis calls the passage an allegory.

as a serious ethical text. Such an attitude to tragedy is alien to Plato, who rejected such poetry from the educational curriculum (*Resp.* 377b–392c), but it would fit in a Cynic tradition, where Antisthenes read Homer for positive ethical instruction, and Diogenes of Sinope cited from tragedies and probably wrote his own.⁶¹ The one other prose saying that refers to traditional myth in Stobaeus' chapter 2.31 features Diogenes: when a geometer was calling Diogenes uneducated, he replied, "Pardon me for not having learned what Chiron also failed to teach Achilles" (2.31.118).⁶² Most of the eight excerpts from Books 2 and 3 of Plato's *Republic* in Stobaeus' chapter,⁶³ meanwhile, are taken from points before and after the central rejection of poetry at 377b–392c, and the only two quotations from this section included are the introduction (2.31.110v = *Resp.* 376e–377d) and an early point of warning against the possibility that examples in poetry can cause civic violence (2.31.110w = *Resp.* 378c–e). Stobaeus' own use of excerpts from tragedy and comedy throughout his *Anthology* to illustrate ethical concepts implies that he favored the Cynic version of Socrates' attitude to poetry over Plato's version, and the presence of this Socratic saying in the chapter on education might reflect this preference. Clearly, Plato was such an important contributor to the topic that his texts figure heavily in the chapter, but his clearest statements about the rejection of traditional poetry are ignored, and, plausibly instead, Socrates is featured presenting an odd allegory of Orestes and Electra.

The recommendation of decent rest on the long road of life (2.31.105) is also clearly connected to the Cynic tradition. The Cynics famously favored the short, steep road to happiness over the long, smooth road.⁶⁴ Socrates' presumption of a long road and his recommendation of rest along the way seem unsuitable to the tough versions of the Cynic short-cut, but this softer version of the analogy fits with his other statements about the road of life in the *Anthology*. Two are directly in conflict with Diogenes of Sinope's choice of the short steep road over the long smooth one: "One should choose the smoothest road and the most painless life" (3.1.88); "Self-sufficiency, like a short and delightful road, holds much joy and little effort" (3.5.34). These are so directly in conflict with

61 On Antisthenes, see *SSR* v A 187–193; for Diogenes' tragedies, see DL 6.80, and for his citation of, e.g., Euripides, see DL 6.36, 6.55.

62 Elsewhere in the *Anthology*, Socrates uses mythical references in 3.4.64 (Proteus), 3.4.118 (Achilles and Thersites), 3.5.30 (the Sirens), and 4.15.16 (the horn of Amaltheia, discussed in §3 below).

63 These are 2.31.106, 108, 110n, 110r, and 110v–y.

64 See, most clearly, letters 30 and 37 of pseudo-Diogenes of Sinope and the material collected in *SSR* v A 136. On Diogenes' letter 30, see Prince 2015, 399–402, and on the possibility that Antisthenes already advocated for the short route, see Prince 2017.

the Cynic message that they must come from a discourse aiming to reclaim Socrates from the Cynics, perhaps shaped by the Stoics. Two other analogies use the image of the road consistently with Diogenes' choice: "Intelligence collects traveling supplies for life, as for the road, not those worth a lot, but the more necessary" (3.3.62); "It is the same thing to be haughty in times of good fortune and to run for the prize on a slippery road" (4.41.58). The analogy of the long road in 2.31.105 could be akin to analogies of 3.1.88 and 3.5.34 that appear to correct the Cynics, but it also resembles 3.3.62 and 4.41.58, which reject excess and recklessness, such as might characterize a journey over the long road without a rest. Its recommendation of rest (*anapausis*) might even point to Antisthenes. A moderately hedonist saying attributed to Antisthenes classifies pleasure as a good, as long as it is an "unregrettable pleasure" (*ametamelêton hêdonên*) (SSR v A 127). Plato refers once to an "unregrettable pleasure," in *Timaeus* 59d1, where the speaker recommends indulgence in stories that might not be true as a rest (*anapausis*) from the rigorous discussion of eternal objects.⁶⁵ Also Socrates, elsewhere within the *Anthology* of Stobaeus (4.39.18), defines happiness as "unregrettable pleasure." It is plausible that it was Antisthenes who gave Socrates this line recommending decent rest along the journey over the long road: the qualification that the rest should be decent, like the qualification that the pleasure should be unregrettable, suggests that the proper rest is not detrimental to the journey and even enhances it.

Overall, more than half of the Socratic material in chapter 2.31 resonates with details in the remains from Antisthenes and Diogenes of Sinope and, in consideration of the high frequency of Cynic authorities in the chapter, it seems likely that the bulk of the Socratic material has the same sources as the Cynic and that Socrates has been given the profile of a proto-Cynic in pre-Stobaeian sources. Stobaeus' arrangement of the chapter does not emphasize this point; it is only the selection of material on Socrates included that would suggest that Stobaeus considers Socrates to be like a Cynic. Although this chapter is more heavily reconstructed by modern editors than other chapters of the *Anthology*, the points where Socrates' views differ from those of Plato—the importance of perceptible objects in education, the rejection of thorough learning, and the allegorical use of myth—are enough embedded in Stobaeus' selected material that editorial factors are unimportant. Of all the surviving chapters in Stobaeus, this one presents the most Cynic type of Socrates. Some chapters in Book 3, especially 3.5 and 3.13, contain Socratic statements that are proto-Cynic, but overall, matters are different in most chapters of Stobaeus' Books 3 and 4.

65 The association between SSR v A 127 and Pl. *Ti.* 59d1 is claimed in Prince 2015, 382.

2.2 *Socrates in Book 3*

Fifty of the one hundred chapters that constitute Books 3 and 4—whose survival in manuscript is more complete than that of the first two books—contain Socratic statements.⁶⁶ (The third chapter of Book 4, “On the people,” is entirely lost, the only chapter of the so-called *Florilegium* that is missing.) Taken together, these books contain 124 separately lemmatized Socratic statements plus statements within four passages by Aelian, Hierocles, or Arrian (Epictetus) as identified above. Of the fifty chapters where Socrates’ statements are used, two are outstanding for their volume of Socratic entry: chapter 3.1 “On Virtue” contains 20 separate statements and chapter 3.4 “On Mindlessness” contains 18 (both these counts include sequences of unattributed sayings attributed to Socrates by editors), all brief in form, mostly analogies. Eight additional chapters—six in Book 3 and two in Book 4—contain four or more Socratic sayings, and three chapters in Book 3 contain three sayings each. Together, these thirteen chapters contain 85 of the 124 statements of unembedded Socrates in Books 3 and 4.

The 42 chapters of Book 3 are antithetical pairs of virtues and faults, beginning from the most general level, Virtue (*aretê*) (3.1) and Vice (*kakia*) (3.2) themselves, then proceeding through four cardinal virtues, similar to those of Plato’s *Republic*, in pairs with their opposites—Intelligence (*phronêsis*)⁶⁷ (3.3) and Mindlessness (*aphrosunê*) (3.4), Temperance (*sôphrosunê*) (3.5) and Licentiousness (*akolasia*) (3.5), Courage (*andreia*) (3.7) and Cowardice (*deilia*) (3.8), and Justice (*dikaiosunê*) (3.9) and Injustice (*adikia*) (3.10). After the first ten chapters the pattern is less clear: virtues and faults seem to be more specific versions of the cardinal four, ranging from virtues and faults of speaking (plausibly aspects of intelligence) in chapters 11–14, appetites and their control (related to temperance) in chapters 15–18, inclinations of passion similar to Platonic spirit (*thumos*), the basis for courage, in chapters 19–24, and topics related to justice in chapters 27–8 and the concluding chapters 39–42. Clearly the structure is not a tidy hierarchy derived from the cardinal virtues: for example, virtues and faults of memory (plausibly to be connected with

66 This count includes three chapters in Book 4 (4.27 “Brotherly Love,” 4.33 “Comparison of Poverty and Wealth,” and 4.55 “On Burial”) where Socrates’ single statements are not unembedded, but within passages attributed by Stobaeus to Hierocles, Arrian (Epictetus), and Aelian, respectively. These are three of the five Stobaean entries added to the core set of Socratic statements, as explained above. The other two such additions, from Aelian, appear in chapters (2.31 and 3.22) where unembedded Socrates appears four times or more.

67 Stobaeus’ term for the title in chapter 3.3, *phronêsis*, must stand in for the virtue called Wisdom (*sophia*) in the *Republic*.

intelligence again) appear in chapters 25–6. But a three level-structure—first Virtue in general (the longest chapter), second the four cardinal virtues (all moderately long chapters, apart from Cowardice in 3.8), and third 16 more particular virtues (the shortest chapters, with four exceptions), each with its partner fault⁶⁸—seems integral to Book 3. Each intertitle in Book 3 takes the same form, a prepositional phrase using *peri* plus the articulation of a virtue or fault, usually (in 40 of 42 cases) through a single noun.⁶⁹ Intertitles in Book 4, by contrast, become more complex and frequently contain a thesis statement.

Socrates speaks most in the general chapters at the opening of Book 3, with 58 of his 88 utterances in Book 3 classified in the first ten chapters. Of these chapters, Socrates is absent only from chapters 3.8 “On Cowardice” and 3.9 “On Justice.” Beyond 3.10, Socrates is most present in three of the paired sets: Frankness and Flattery in 3.13–14 (eight statements), Self-control and its opposite in 17–18 (three statements plus one episode attributed to Aelian, all in 3.17), and Self-knowledge and Arrogant Disdain (*huperopsia*) in 3.21–22 (five statements plus one episode attributed to Aelian). He is entirely missing from eight of the 16 pairings of virtue and vice in the end of Book 3, and in three others he appears only once. This is a different distribution of Socrates from that in Book 4, where his repeated presence within any chapter is rare, but his singular appearance more frequent. The implication, perhaps, is that in Book 3 Stobaeus assigns Socrates to definite areas in the ethical matrix, whereas in Book 4 he includes Socrates as broadly as possible, as if in support of the structure of political and social thought he has constructed through the titles of his chapters.

In the first ten chapters, Socrates has far more to say about Virtue (20 statements) than Vice (one statement), but when it comes to Intelligence (five statements) versus Mindlessness (eighteen statements), he is more articulate in scolding fault than praising virtue. This imbalance, which is unmatched in the remainder of Book 3, seems to reflect Stobaeus’ material in chapters 3.3. and 3.4 overall: there are 66 statements on Intelligence and nearly double so many (122) on Mindlessness. If chapter 3.3 lacks quantity of Socratic content, however, it compensates through richer than average quality: whereas chapter 3.4 offers merely seventeen analogies and one *apophthegma*, chapter 3.3 offers both a quasi-definition (the first from Socrates in Book 3)

68 Just one pairing seems to reverse the order of virtue and vice: self-love (3.23) seems to be a fault, and conscience (3.24) seems to be a virtue.

69 Some of these intertitles are known elsewhere as book titles, cited in Diogenes Laertius, within Stobaeus, or shared with Plutarch’s *Moralia*. The overall structure appears to be of Stobaeus’ own making. See Hense 1916, col. 2558–61.

and an episode. Socrates speaks also under the headings of two more cardinal virtues, Temperance (five statements) and Courage (two statements), and two more faults, Intemperance (three statements) and Injustice (three statements). The chapter on Courage shares with the chapter on Intelligence the distinction of containing both a Socratic quasi-definition and a Socratic episode. What the chapter on Temperance (*sôphrosunê*) lacks in this respect is remedied, perhaps, in chapter 3.17, on the closely comparable virtue Self-Control (*enkrateia*), where Socrates provides both a definition and a longer episode. To judge from the distribution of statements in both the opening ten chapters and the remainder of the book, Socrates' most intensive interests are in the virtues of intelligence and temperance or self-control.

Socrates' absence from two of the opening ten chapters can be explained in each case. Chapter 3.8 "On Cowardice" has only 20 entries, thirteen of them from poets, and the absence of Socrates seems to be part of Stobaeus' brevity as well as the recession of his voice overall as Book 3 proceeds. His absence from chapter 3.9 "On Justice" would be less readily explained, except that Stobaeus' chapter culminates in nine lengthy extracts from the classical Socratic literature where Socrates is featured centrally in discussion of justice: two (3.9.56–7) from Xenophon's *Memorabilia* 4.2 and 4.4, where Socrates discusses justice with Euthydemus and Hippias, followed by six (3.9.58–63) from Plato's *Republic* (Book 1 three times, plus Books 4, 9, and 10), where Socrates discusses justice with unsympathetic and sympathetic interlocutors such as Thrasymachus and Glaucon, and finally one extract (3.9.64) from the *Clitophon* attributed to Plato, where Socrates' challenger Clitophon recites a Socratic companion's sympathetic explanation of Socrates' positive teaching on justice (408e–410b). Stobaeus' passage breaks off before the less sympathetic conclusion to Clitophon's speech, where he accuses Socrates of protreptic without positive instruction. Plausibly Stobaeus found the statements of Platonic and Xenophontic Socrates on the topic of justice so compelling and thorough that there was no need to clutter his chapter with any other less informative marker that this was a Socratic topic.

The quantity and concentration of text extracted from classical Socratic literature at the end of chapter 3.9 is unmatched in the first ten chapters of Book 3,⁷⁰ but chapter 3.1 also ends with a large number of excerpts from Plato (twelve) and two from Xenophon. In this case, 20 statements of unembedded Socrates are included throughout the chapter, in six different locations, with the last nine statements ordered together with the concluding excerpts from Plato

70 The closest match is 3.7 "On Courage," where five of the last six entries are extracts from Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and three dialogues of Plato (*Apology*, *Phaedo*, *Protagoras*).

and Xenophon. This is remarkably similar to the placement of Socrates' many statements in chapter 2.31. The first three sequences of Socratic statement in chapter 3.1 (at entries 23, 73–4, and 84–90) appear amid other short sayings and extracts from various authorities and happen to be flanked by short lists of separately lemmatized sayings from the Seven Wise Men (Chilon, Bias, and Cleobulus⁷¹ at 20–2, and Cleobulus, Bias, and Pittacus, plus Democritus, at 91–5). The fourth (104) is a single *apophthegma*, placed alone between long textual extracts from Eusebius (103) and Pseudo-Archytas (105–14). The fifth and sixth sequences (180–2 and 185–90) are closely preceded by two long entries lemmatized as Demetrius of Phaleron and Sosiades that collect the wisdom of all seven of the Wise Men (172–3), separated by six statements attributed to Heraclitus (174–9). Insofar as the extracts from Demetrius and Sosiades consolidate the wisdom of the Seven Wise Men, who have appeared individually earlier in the chapter, the series of Socrates' statements at 180–2 and 185–90 seems to introduce the last part of the chapter, which consists entirely in statements by unembedded Socrates and extracts from Plato and Xenophon (183–4, 191–3 and 197–208⁷²), apart from three intervening passages from pseudo-Aristotle and Pseudo-Archytas (194–6) and two concluding passages from Musonius and Democritus (209–10). The final Socratic material would form one series of nine statements if not for the interruption of two short extracts (36 and 52 words, respectively) from Plato's *Gorgias* and *Sophist* at 183–4.

Whatever else may be implied by this ordering, it seems that in the introductory chapter to Book 3 Socrates is important on the one hand as one expert among many, in a list of the Seven Wise Men with extensions, and on the other hand as either a link or a contrasting voice to another kind of tradition, the more fully articulated discussions of Plato and Xenophon. In chapter 3.1, by contrast with chapter 3.9, Plato's and Xenophon's texts are apparently insufficient to represent the voice of Socrates, and a balanced view of Virtue at the most general level requires that Socrates speak under his own name.

The way Stobaeus represents Socrates' contribution to this topic is, however, puzzling. First, the term "virtue" (*aretê*) appears only once throughout the 20 Socratic sayings Stobaeus selects as representations of Socrates' views on

71 The name Cleobulus is transmitted as "Theobulus" at 3.1.22 and 3.1.91, but the connection with the other Wise Men shows that Cleobulus is meant.

72 These are three sequential extracts from the Platonic *Alcibiades* (191–3), two from Plato's *Apology* (197–8), three from Plato's *Laws* (201–3), one from *On Virtue* of the *Appendix Platonica*, attributed to Plato by Stobaeus (204), four from Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (205–7, with 205 distinguished by editors into a and b), and one from Plato's *Republic* (208).

Virtue; instead, Socrates' statements, which are mostly analogies, concern reason, mind, material possessions, and praise. They are also mildly hedonist: the terms "most pleasureably," "more pleasurable," and "pleasure" occur as ideals in three analogies (3.1.23, 87, and 186), and "more painless" or "most painless" in two (3.1.74, 88). In the case where the term "virtue" occurs (in 3.1.87), Socrates duplicates a statement attributed to Antisthenes earlier in the same chapter (3.1.28 = *SSR* v A 125), the only duplication with Antisthenes in the *Anthology*, saying, "Neither a symposium without community nor wealth without virtue brings pleasure." Second, the full set of Socratic analogies of chapter 3.1 includes numerous near duplications with others used throughout the *Anthology*. For example, Socrates' recommendation of the painless life in 3.1.88, "One should choose the smoothest road and the most painless life," resembles one of his analogies in the chapter "On Temperance" (3.5.34): "Self-sufficiency, like a short and delightful road, holds much joy and little effort" (3.5.34). His recommendation that life should not depend on one hope (3.1.104)—"Neither should a ship be moored from one anchor nor a life from one hope"—resembles his single saying in the following chapter "On Vice" (3.2.45)—"It is the same thing to moor a boat from an insecure anchor and a hope from a feeble mind"—and it is exactly replicated as a saying by Epictetus in a chapter "On Hope" in Book 4 (4.46.22). Elsewhere, Stobaeus connects Socratic sayings more closely to his chapter heading: for example, in chapters 3.13 "On Frankness" and 3.14 "On Flattery," the pertinent term is used in each of the eight total Socratic analogies included. The generic quality of the Socratic material in chapter 3.1 can be explained from the generic topic, perhaps. The volume and placement of these Socratic statements are evidently more important than their substantial claims.

The coincidences with Antisthenes and Epictetus in two of these cases might imply that Antisthenes and Arrian (Epictetus) were authors of texts in which Socrates made these statements.⁷³ Of course, other explanations are available, most obviously the generality of such statements and their easy transferability from one authority to another. A further saying of Socrates in the chapter "On Virtue" (3.1.185)—"Neither a horse without a bit nor money without reasoning is it possible to use safely"—is attributed in similar words to Pythagoras in Stobaeus' chapter "On Wealth" (4.31.122), and the legendary character of Pythagoras' sayings suggests that this is a case of mere transfer, like the analogies traced by Elter. Yet chapter 3.1 also contains a Socratic analogy precisely traceable, as it seems, to the speech of Alcibiades in Plato's *Symposium* (222a) (3.1.85): "When the mouth of the wise man is opened, the

73 Hense proposed a source in Arrian (Epictetus) for 3.1.104.

fine things of the soul are seen, just as the statues when the temple is opened." The difficult questions of the origin and tradition behind the statements of Stobaeus' Socrates can be addressed only through more study of the unique qualities of Socrates' various utterances. The best beginning for such inquiry is not the short statements of Stobaeus' Socrates, but the long ones. We turn to the remainder of those in Section 3.

A final point concerns inconsistency among Socrates' short statements in Book 3, especially within chapters. Despite the overall uniform sense of his statements, inconsistency can be found in the area of his hedonism: the degree to which Socrates urges his audience to seek virtue at the expense of external comforts, but also to seek ease and lack of pain. The Socrates portrayed in Plato, Xenophon, and Diogenes Laertius never recommends ease or lack of pain. Socrates' 88 statements in Stobaeus' Book 3, however, are mixed on this topic. Six urge pleasure or delight as the standard of preference (the three from chapter 3.1 listed above plus 3.5.34, 3.5.35, and 3.13.61), whereas three others require the defeat or rejection of pleasure (3.5.30, 3.5.32, 3.17.27); in 3.5.32 the pleasures are qualified as the "foul and unjust" ones, and in the other two cases pleasure is unqualified. Socrates' own superiority over desire for food and drink (3.17.21), meanwhile, is uncontested, and riddance of need is equated with approach to divinity (3.5.33), as it is according to the Socrates of Xenophon (*Mem.* 1.6.10). As for pain, Socrates' statements include three recommending avoidance of pain or effort (the two from chapter 3.1 listed above plus 3.5.34) and none that recommends embracing it. Five sayings imply the setting of a symposium or dinner, a hearth, or a general social scene (*homilia*) (3.1.23, 3.1.87, 3.1.181, 3.10.55, 3.16.27) and three others allude to good and bad wine or drinking (3.4.57, 3.4.115, 3.10.54). Of the eleven statements that explicitly mention wealth, money, gold, silver, or lovers of these things, three (3.1.180, 3.10.55, 3.16.28) claim that wealth is separate from virtue, three (3.1.87, 3.1.185, 3.4.114) imply that wealth needs connection to virtue or intelligence, three (3.10.46, 3.10.54, 3.16.27) imply that wealth or pursuit of profit is corrupting, and two (3.5.31 and 3.17.30) make "wealth" a metaphor for assets of soul, self-sufficiency and poverty of desire, respectively. Fine external adornment, which is a common application of wealth, is also rejected as different from virtue in many statements (such as 3.1.84), and one statement rejects unjust profit (3.1.188). Poverty is embraced once in metaphor, 3.17.30 (already mentioned), and it is made a matter of indifference once, at 3.13.64, where Socrates in one of his most proto-Cynic utterances says, "Just as it is possible to be in good condition when dressed in a shabby cloak (*tribôna ruparon*), in the same way it is possible to speak frankly when living a life of poverty (*bion penikron*)." The most hedonist statements of Stobaeus' Socrates are clustered in some chapters, such as 3.1, and the least

hedonist in others, such as 3.17, and the best explanation for the mixture of Socratic opinion on pleasure is that the tradition Stobaeus used offered such a mixture, since “pleasure” is a wide-ranging concept.

A contradiction in Socrates’ attitude to Cynic doctrine on such matters—which holds that discomforts such as effort and poverty are tools in the development of virtue, and dependence on external resources such as wealth are impediments—can be seen among Socrates’ six successive statements in chapter 3.5 “On Temperance” (3.5.30–5).⁷⁴ Overall, these statements are consistent with Cynicism: explicit references to self-sufficiency in 3.5.31 and riddance of need in 3.5.33 resemble statements attributed to Antisthenes (DL 6.11 = SSR v A 134). In 3.5.35, Socrates may be referring to erotic self-sufficiency of the kind that Diogenes of Sinope practiced (by masturbating, DL 6.46): “Socrates said that we should hunt out (*thêrasthai*) pleasures not from others but from ourselves, and predispose (*prodiatithesthai*) the body in the necessary way.” The reference to hunting seems to allude to erotics, and the reference to the body seems to confirm this. But amid this apparently pro-Cynic advice, Socrates equates “self-sufficiency” (*autarkeia*) with a pleasant road free from effort (*ponos*), as discussed above in connection with use of this image in chapter 2.31: “Self-sufficiency, like a short and delightful road, holds much joy and little effort (3.5.34).” The use of Cynic terms like *autarkeia* and *ponos* and the image of the short road guarantees a reference to the Cynic short-cut, and Socrates’ statement is modeled rhetorically on theirs: in place of the “steep and difficult” (*prosanê kai duskolon*) road chosen by Pseudo-Diogenes of Sinope,⁷⁵ Socrates has a “short and delightful” (*bracheia kai epiterpês*) road. But the boast of little effort contradicts the normal Cynic message. Of course, it is plausible that the accomplished wise man, who has mastered temperance, does experience joy in his state and expends no effort, and if Socrates speaks from this point of view, there is no contradiction with Cynicism. But the Cynic message about the short road to happiness is normally addressed to those who are not yet sages: hence they must travel the road. The normal point of the message is that effort and hardship are required in their approach to happiness. Since Stobaeus frequently, especially in chapter 3.1, presents a Socrates who seeks pleasure and avoids pain, the anti-hardship tone of Socrates’ statement in 3.5.34 fits his overall persona. Because this statement is situated in an otherwise pro-Cynic sequence, though, it is plausible that Stobaeus’ source,

74 This chapter is one where the ordering of sayings varies between the manuscripts: see Hense 1894, 265–6 (his version of this text). But the variation is slight for 3.5.32–5, which are of most concern here.

75 Pseudo-Diogenes, Letter 30 section 2.

or even Stobaeus, shaped the statement precisely as a reclamation of Socrates from the Cynic tradition.

2.3 *Socrates in Book 4*

Socrates is cited less in Book 4 than in Book 3, but again in Book 4 he appears in roughly half of the chapters (40 statements, in 28 of 58 chapters), and it is in this book that Stobaeus' Socrates speaks in the most unexpected ways, by the standard of attitudes he displays elsewhere, including in the texts of Plato and Xenophon: he endorses inherited nobility, wealth gained and used well, and the subordination of women to men. The topics of Book 4, which opens with the chapter "On Government" and hence seems to be subordinated to politics, range into questions of family life and personal attitudes to illness, bad luck, old age, and death. The majority of the chapters of Book 4 where Socrates' statement is included contain exactly one Socratic statement (23 of 28), as though he is called on to endorse each of the topics in Stobaeus' scheme, and in three of these chapters, Socrates has the last word. In two chapters Socrates speaks with high frequency, five times in the first and most general chapter, "On Government," and six times in 4.31 "On Wealth." Also notable is his presence in chapter 4.29 "On Good Birth," because in addition to his two unembedded statements, he is used as an example in each of two dialogues, one by Aristotle and one by Plutarch entitled *On Good Birth*, that direct the course of Stobaeus' chapter. Two other chapters of Book 4, 4.39 "On Happiness" and 4.46 "On Hope," contain two Socratic statements each.

Book 4 is arranged in a progressive sequence; but the intertitles in this book are typically more complicated than those in Book 3, and their order suggests progress through a number of arguments rather than a comprehensive array of qualities. The first eight chapters concern political rule and its forms, and chapter 4.6, as if in conclusion, bears the intertitle "That Monarchy is Best"; chapters 4.7 and 4.8 consider the traditionally good and bad forms of monarchy, kingship and tyranny. The next eleven chapters concern roles in the city, ordered under war (chapter 9) and peace (chapter 14). In chapter 20 begins a sequence of fourteen chapters connected with private life: marriage, procreation, family relations, household management, and wealth. This series clearly resembles a progressive argument, as the intertitles designate debates for and against erotic desire and beauty, then, as if to imply the affirmative position, proceed to debates for and against marriage, then, as if to imply the affirmative position again, present passages for and against procreation.⁷⁶ Chapters 29–30, "On Noble Birth" and "On Base Birth," and chapters 31–3,

⁷⁶ See the similar analysis of Searby 2011, 37–8.

“On Wealth,” “On Poverty,” and “Comparison of Poverty and Wealth,” include traditional philosophical reasons to reject the importance of external assets such as heritage and wealth in preference to justice and assets of soul, but the scope and ordering of material in each case implies Stobaeus’ overall concern with the importance of both. The final nineteen chapters, 34–52, is a series of personal topics of a more existential kind, in a sequence of the life cycle: life, pain, sickness, health, fortune, misfortune, old age, and death are addressed.

Book 4, like Book 3, contains pairings of apparently good and bad concepts (Kingship and Tyranny, Wealth and Poverty, Noble Birth and Base Birth), but it also bifurcates single chapters into passages for and against the concept set forth in the intertitle, in the manner seen in Book 2’s chapter 2, “On Dialectic.” In Book 4, five chapters (15, “On Farming,” 18, “On Crafts,” 20 on bodily erotics, 21 on bodily beauty, and 32, “On Poverty”) are bifurcated into a beginning section in favor and a concluding section “to the opposite point” (*eis to enantion*). Four additional chapters, all within the sequence on family matters (22 on marriage, 24 on procreation, 29, “On Noble Birth,” and 31, “On Wealth”), are subdivided further into four or more parts, with sub-titles indicating more nuanced options regarding the value of the title concept. The attribution of the sub-titles in these complicated chapters to the author of the original *Anthology*, not a later copyist, is clear from the arrangement of the excerpts of poetry and prose: at points where a new sub-title is given, excerpts from poetry begin again, and *apophthegmata* mixed with prose excerpts follow these. Chapter 22 on marriage, in seven parts, is most nuanced. Indeed, this chapter serves as a kind of heading for the other three chapters so subdivided: the connection between marriage and procreation is clear from the ordering of intertitles, and the subtitle of Chapter 22f,⁷⁷ “That in marriage one should not consider noble birth or wealth but character,” indicates two concepts to be illustrated in their own right in chapters that follow later. Socrates has little to say about marriage—only the quip about its regretability mentioned above (4.22.59)—and nothing to say about procreation. But in the other two of these more complicated chapters, Socrates takes an important role: he comes across as a far more moderate social critic than others, such as the Cynics, and indeed he justifies both the reality of inherited nobility and the usefulness of wealth, just as Stobaeus apparently sought to justify them through the implied arguments of his intertitles.

77 References to Stobaeus’ sub-chapters conventionally use letters with the chapter number. Numbering of the entries in each chapter is continuous and does not start anew with each sub-chapter. The letters have been mostly omitted in the present discussion and appendix, except where they enable concise reference.

Socrates appears in only two of the first eight chapters in Book 4, and the kind of material included in these chapters is unique within the *Anthology*. Of Socrates' five utterances in chapter 4.1, four appear together at approximately mid-chapter (4.1.82–5, in a chapter of 161 excerpts) in a sequence of replies to questions: What city is best managed? "The one living with law and prosecuting the unjust"; What city is lawless? "The one in which the rulers are appointed with their buddies"; What city is strongest? "The one having good men"; Who should hold office? "Those who have been raised well from childhood and upon coming of age have not become traitors of their own maturity⁷⁸ for the sake of gain." Although Socrates' replies are trite, their consistent reference to law and multiple leaders presumes a political constitution, in accord with this chapter in general, rather than a monarchy, as the eventual sequence of Stobaeus' intertitles (4.6–8) seems to favor. These answers by Socrates are unique both within the set of Socratic material used by Stobaeus and within chapter 4.1. Nowhere else in the *Anthology* does Stobaeus include Socrates' replies to multiple questions in sequence, and nowhere else in chapter 4.1 is there a sequence of four *apophthegmata* from a single authority. (Solon is comparable in having two at 4.1.76–7 and two others at 4.1.89 and 91, which are divided by a short statement from Pericles' funeral oration according to Thucydides 2.46.) The chapter is otherwise dominated by short and long prose excerpts from mainly classical Athenian texts still extant, for example, 8 excerpts from Demosthenes, 9 from Thucydides, 3 from Herodotus, 5 from Xenophon, and 51 from Plato, including 31 from the *Republic* alone. Of the 161 items in this chapter, only 18 are *apophthegmata*: in addition to Socrates, these come from Pythagoras, Solon, Periander, Aesop, Zeno, and others; as in chapter 3.1, there is an excerpt representing the Seven Wise Men together (4.1.134, from Plutarch's *Dinner of the Seven Wise Men*, 154d–f). Socrates answers key questions on the topic of the chapter; no other speaker addresses the matter of political leadership in such a basic and complete way. Socrates does not carry the burden of asserting the primary values of a political sovereignty shared among many: excerpts from writers like Thucydides and Demosthenes, and the Athenian Ephebic oath, which appears at 4.1.48 immediately after the other Socratic statement included in this chapter (4.1.47), articulate these values more fully. But Socrates is the most prominent speaker of *apophthegmata* who adds assertive force to the very Athenian topic of the chapter.

Socrates' analogies in 4.1.47 and 4.7.26 (in the chapter "Precepts on Kingship"), the only Socratic statements in the first eight chapters of Book 4 beyond his

78 Editors suspect that the term "maturity" is corrupt and suggest "good reputation" or "good upbringing."

series of answers to questions at 4.1.82–5, are outstanding in a different way among the material from Socrates in Stobaeus' *Anthology*. In each case, it appears that the material has been adjusted, if not distorted, to fit its context: what should be the rhetorical tenor has been reversed with the rhetorical vehicle. In 4.1.47, Socrates says, "In good fortune as in political association, the enjoyment should be shared among the worthy." A common share in a political association among the worthy is presupposed here as the standard by which the sharing of good fortune should be judged. Socrates' statement is about the ideal distribution of good fortune, not about political association. It is an ethical statement that uses the political realm as its vehicle. Yet the statement is included in a chapter on political association, where Socrates should be making a claim about that topic. This amounts to a distortion of the material and suggests that the author of the collection could find nothing better for representing Socrates on the topic of political association. The strong commitment to a political common ground implies that Socrates is devoted to the ideal of sharing political association among the worthy. But his statement is not on this topic. In the other case, 4.7.26, external evidence shows that the tenor and vehicle in Socrates' implied analogical statement have been reversed. As a precept on kingship, Socrates says, "The better king is the one able to rule his own passions." A near parallel in the *Gnomologium Vaticanum* (no. 472) puts it this way: "Socrates used to say that only he was a king, the one able to rule his own passions." The point is a commonplace in the writings of Plato and Xenophon, most clearly addressed in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* 2.1, where Socrates accosts Aristippus with questions about the better ruler, the one trained to control his appetites or the one not so trained. Kingship is a metaphor for the ethical feat of self-rule. Yet Stobaeus' chapter 4.7 takes kingship literally as the tenor of the statement. These two distortions are hardly unique in the *Anthology*: the various duplications discussed above show that material can be loosely attached to its chapter title. But the fact that both of two analogies in these first eight chapters of Book 4 are distorted, together with the unusual string of questions and answers in 4.1.82–5, suggests that Stobaeus was not following his normal sources and practices for using Socrates in this part of his *Anthology*, but doing so in special ways. The further implication, plausibly, is that Stobaeus was more eager to place Socrates as an advocate of classical Athenian democracy and, in the situation of monarchy, just kingship than were his normal sources.

Unembedded Socrates is hardly used in the eleven chapters of Stobaeus' second sequence of Book 4, chapters 9–19, on roles in the state under conditions of war and peace. Only in chapter 4.15, "On Farming," is any statement from Socrates included. This is a longer excerpt from what is apparently a Neoplatonic

text, to be discussed in detail in Section 3. Excerpts from Plato and Xenophon, including speeches from Socrates, are used throughout this section in small numbers, and in chapter 4.13, “On Generals,” Socrates’ advice and conversation is excerpted at length from three episodes at the beginning of the third book of Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* (4.13.27–9). But even Socrates’ name occurs in only six excerpts in these eleven chapters. This relative absence of Socrates must reflect either Stobaeus’ view, or the implications in the pre-Stobaeian material, that Socrates’ expertise concerns general roles in the city, not particular ones.

It is in the last two sequences of Book 4, on family and on existential questions, where Socrates appears exactly once in almost every chapter. By the measure of presence by chapter, this range of coverage is unparalleled in the *Anthology*. Advice about how wives should consort with husbands (4.23.58), sons with fathers (4.25.42) and the reverse (4.26.22), and brothers with brothers (4.27.20), is reminiscent of conversations Socrates holds in the second and third books of Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*, and indeed Xenophon’s texts seems to guide Stobaeus’ sequence of intertitles in this section. Three of Stobaeus’ chapters on family and household management (4.25, 27 and 28) present extended excerpts from the *Memorabilia* and *Oeconomicus* featuring advice of Socrates, and the other (4.26) concludes with a pseudographic letter from Xenophon to Crito in which Socrates delivers his protreptic message, on the importance of fathers’ bequeathing virtue to their children rather than wealth or luxury.⁷⁹ The possibility that Stobaeus was using Xenophon as the model for this series of intertitles is indicated by the length of the excerpts (*Mem.* 2.2 and 2.3 are reproduced in full as 4.25.24 and 4.27.22, respectively), their order, which matches the order in the *Memorabilia*, and the placement of these excerpts in final position in their chapters, in 25, 26 and 28, and near the end in 27. Meanwhile, another saying about reconciliation between brothers is attributed to Socrates at 4.27.20 within an extract from Hierocles, and the same saying is attributed verbatim to Euclides earlier in the chapter (4.27.15). Whether or not Euclides was author of Socratic dialogues on familial relationships, this coincidence suggests that there is a classical heritage to Socrates’ engagement with these topics beyond the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon.

79 Xen. *Mem.* 2.2 (Socrates’ advice to Lamprocles on obedience to his mother Xanthippe) is quoted in full as Stob. 4.25.54, and Xen. *Mem.* 2.3 (Socrates’ advice to Chaerephon and Chaerecrates on how to love each other) is quoted in full as Stob. 4.27.22. A shorter excerpt from Xen. *Mem.* 3.8.8–10 (Socrates’ advice on what makes a good house) is quoted as Stob. 4.28.22, and another shorter excerpt from the *Oeconomicus* 6.4–5 concludes the Stobaeian chapter on household management with a statement of Socrates’ view that household management is no science (Stob. 4.28.23). Pseudo-Xenophon’s letter to Crito is excerpted as Stob. 4.26.29.

In these four chapters the Xenophontic Socrates appears prominently but also seems to reach his end, while unembedded Socrates continues to occupy Stobaeus' further chapters. The two overlap in chapters 4.25 and 26, where unembedded Socrates offers advice on relations between parents and children, both times defending the father's right to punish: "One must accommodate oneself to a senseless father as to a harsh law" (4.25.42) and "The castigation of a father is a sweet medicine: for its helping is greater than its biting" (4.26.22). These match poorly to the citations from Xenophon, where the father's power to punish is never evoked, but seem to reflect a new interest, whether on the part of Stobaeus or his sources, in invoking the authority of Socrates in support of this more conventional paternal role. (It is the mother's harshness that has to be endured by Lamprocles in *Mem.* 2.2.) This departure from Xenophon, at first presented in juxtaposition with Xenophontic excerpts, becomes more complete in the remainder of Book 4. As Stobaeus' 30 additional chapters continue into topics like Good Birth, Wealth, Life, Hope, and Happiness, citations from the *Memorabilia* nearly cease. Xenophon is cited almost always from outside his Socratica, foremost from the *Cyropaedia*, while Socrates continues to be cited in unembedded form.⁸⁰ The patriarchal tendency of unembedded Socrates is underlined in 4.23.58, where women are to obey men as men obey laws, and 4.46.26, where woman needs man just as hope needs effort for generating anything good. No Socratic material in Stobaeus' first three books differentiates between men and women; even the two Xanthippe episodes, to be discussed below, are not sexist.

In Chapters 4.29 "On Good Birth" (*eugeneia*) and 4.30 "On Base Birth" (*dusgeneia*), appropriately taken together because they treat complementary topics, Socrates is given a mediating but subtly directing role in the implied debate over good birth. Chapter 4.29, presented under four sub-chapters, articulates a long-standing controversy over the thesis of interest—whether or not there is something inheritable about virtue, a strand called "good birth" (*eugeneia*)—and resolves it with a positive answer, but one that changes the inheritable asset from wealth, prestige, or power to a kind of virtue based in justice, temperance, and courage. The following chapter "On Base Birth," whose total length matches the shortest sub-chapter in 4.29, rejects superficial judgments of this quality. Socrates has the last word in chapter 4.30 by replying

80 The *Memorabilia* is excerpted only once more in the last 30 chapters, at 4.37.19 (= *Mem.* 1.2.4, a statement about restraint in eating and drinking cited in a Stobaean chapter on health). The *Cyropaedia* is excerpted in chapters 4.33, 37, 39, and 55. Other texts of Xenophon (*Symposium*, *Anabasis*, *Agésilas*, a letter to Sotereia, and the mysterious *On Theognis*) are excerpted in chapters 4.29, 32, 46, 50, 53, and 56.

to one who chided him, “My heritage is a matter of reproach to me, but you are a matter of reproach to your heritage” (4.30.12). In many chapters of the *Anthology* (i.e., 3.9 “On Justice” and 4.28 “On Household Management,” both discussed above) the final position in Stobaeus’ sequence is given to an excerpt that best articulates the message of the chapter, and this is an appropriate description in this case, where all other excerpts are from poetry.

Of the four sub-chapters in 4.29, only 4.29a and 4.29c survive in full Stobaeian form, as a full set of excerpts from poets, short prose statements, and long prose texts. Sub-chapters 4.29b, 4.29d, and 4.30 lack any prose excerpt in long form, and two contain only one short prose passage. This could indicate poor manuscript transmission of these chapters, but in consideration of the symmetry between 4.29a and 4.29c, which both feature prose excerpts from the same dialogues entitled *On Good Birth* attributed to Plutarch (4.29a.21–2, 4.29c.51)⁸¹ and Aristotle (4.29a.24–5, 4.29c.52), it seems more likely that Stobaeus never rounded out all parts of the chapter. The argument proceeds clearly, in the intertitles and the overall content, from 4.29a, which presents a developed *aporia* about the existence of inherited virtue, to 4.29b, where inheritability is denied, to 4.29c, where it is affirmed, and finally to 4.29d, where it receives its alternative description. Unembedded Socrates appears twice in the aporetic first sub-chapter. In addition, excerpts from both Plutarch and Aristotle in this sub-chapter cite Socrates’ case as relevant evidence, and in the final excerpt of the sub-chapter (4.29.26), Plato’s *Alcibiades* 120d–122a, Socrates (not named in the excerpt) instructs Alcibiades about the necessity of good education as a supplement to inherited virtue.

Socrates is an emblem for the *aporia* in the first sub-chapter of 4.29, but he also evokes the main point that will settle the problem in the third sub-chapter. The case of his own heritage and progeny is cited by Plutarch and Aristotle, in contradictory ways. According to the speaker in Plutarch (4.29.22), Socrates is a case in support of the independence of virtue from heritage: the parents of Socrates had menial professions, a midwife and a sculptor. According to the speaker in Aristotle (4.29.25), however, Socrates spoke in favor of heritage as a factor in excellence: he said he married the daughter of Aristides because she carried her father’s virtue. The statements of unembedded Socrates, meanwhile,

81 The excerpts from Plutarch are titled “Against Good Birth” (*Kata Eugeneias*) in Stobaeus’ 4.29a and “On Behalf of Good Birth” (*Huper Eugeneias*) in 4.29c. Since the Lamprian catalogue of Plutarch’s writings records a title “On Good Birth” (*Peri Eugeneias*), we should assume this was a debate in which speakers took positions both against and for good birth, and Stobaeus has divided the roles under two titles.

are comparably ambiguous. His first statement, which directly precedes two excerpts from Plutarch, takes no side on the question: when asked what good birth is, Socrates said, "A good mixture of soul and body" (4.29.20). His second statement, placed between the excerpts from Plutarch and Aristotle, weighs in ostensibly against inheritability: "We judge neither as the best grain that from the finest field, but that best situated toward nourishment, nor as the good man or kindly friend the one coming from outstanding stock, but the one who is better in manner" (4.29.23). Good humans are similar to good grain in that each should be judged by performance rather than origin: origin does not matter. But this comparison also evokes the practice of agriculture and cultivation or breeding, and when this topic emerges prominently in sub-chapter 4.29c, within an excerpt from Plutarch's debate (4.29.51) and also an exegesis of a poem of Theognis (183–90) attributed to Xenophon (4.29.53), its purpose is to uphold the inheritability of virtue. From the selective breeding of crops and herds is reasoned the selective breeding of humans, which has failed according to the exegete of Theognis, who speaks of the unintentional ignorance among human self-breeders in a Socratic way.⁸² Even if this connection between the analogy Socrates evokes and the outcome of the debate in Stobaeus' chapter is unconvincing, Stobaeus has set Socrates in a far more ambiguous position on the topic of good birth than Diogenes Laertius did. According to Diogenes Laertius, Socrates said, "Wealth and good birth hold nothing worthy, but, to the contrary, everything evil" (DL 2.31). Diogenes of Sinope, whose saying on good birth is duplicated in Stobaeus' chapters 4.29a and 4.29d (entries 19 and 57), made this reply to someone inquiring about which people are most well-born: "Those who despise wealth, reputation, pleasure, life, and on the contrary are superior to poverty, ill repute, effort, death." Stobaeus' chapters on good reputation (*eudoxia*) and fame (*phêmhê*), 2.17 and 2.18, are lost; but regarding wealth, pleasure, and life, Stobaeus' Socrates overall does not measure well by Diogenes' standard of good birth.

Socrates' endorsement of wealth in Stobaeus' Book 4, by contrast with good birth, is indicated by the volume of his presence. In chapter 4.31 "On Wealth," also divided under four sub-titles, Socrates is used twice to support the liabilities of wealth in the third section, the "Censure of wealth," and four times to support the conciliatory position of the fourth section, under the sub-title "That money is harmless when it is acquired moderately and justly, and that wealth is among the intermediates." He also speaks one time in the two-part sequential chapter 4.32 "On Poverty," taking the side of its praise, and

82 See n. 14 above.

is featured in an excerpt from Arrian (Epictetus) in chapter 4.33, "Comparison of poverty and wealth," where he explains why he rejects Archelaus' invitation to live in Macedonia. In chapter 4.31 Stobaeus lists 34 passages as "Praise of Wealth" (4.31a), eighteen passages attributing the evils of wealth to the "folly of most people" (4.31b), 40 passages as "Censure of wealth," and 38 passages under the conclusion, where Socrates is placed as the speaker of the first two statements in prose and the two closing statements.

Socrates' "censures" of wealth are faint, by comparison with other statements presented in the context. In 4.31.83, the stricter, he says, "Garments reaching to the feet impede bodies, and resources beyond moderate impede souls."⁸³ In 4.31.90, a longer passage classified here as a speech rather than an *apophthegma*, Socrates laments that being wealthy (*to ploutein*) is separated from being joyful (*to chairein*), for each phase in its experience holds a liability: in using it, one is liable to destruction by excessive indulgence in pleasure; in guarding it, one is liable to destruction by worry; in acquiring it, one is liable to destruction by desire. This statement has a parallel in the *Gnomologium Vaticanum* (no. 497), where instead of enumerating the modes of destruction presented by wealth, Socrates merely quotes Homer's character Menelaus, who says, "So I rule, not rejoicing (*outoi chairôn*) in these acquisitions" (*Od.* 4.93). Clearly Menelaus' statement is essential to Socrates' position, since the verb *chairein* is key to Socrates' lament in both versions. As in the case of the conversion of Xenophon, so here, different details in the transmissions of this story show that both are partial receptions of a common original version. Since Plutarch uses the line of Menelaus to make the same point in *How to Study Poetry* (25a), and a similar interpretation is transmitted in the scholia to the verse in the *Odyssey*, it seems that the generalized interpretation of the Homeric verse was more famous than Socrates' expansive interpretation. Stobaeus transmits the apparently lesser known version of the story. As in the other cases of longer episodes to be discussed below, Stobaeus' version is not derived from any standard tradition but seems to preserve a version uniquely selected from the original. Here, Socrates' distinction of two elements expressed as substantivized verbs, *to ploutein* and *to chairein*, and his use of the verb "have been separated" (*kechoristai*) points to a somewhat technical discussion of the coincidence or identity of experiences, the kind that were held in the Academy, Peripatos, or Stoa. Some evidence might connect this kind of discussion, with reference to the identity or coincidence of pleasure

83 This statement is apparently contradicted by his disciple Aristippus at 4.31.128, where he says that too much wealth, unlike big shoes, can be used.

and virtue, with Antisthenes.⁸⁴ The use of Homer and the rejection of wealth would be fitting to an origin with Antisthenes. At the least, this attribution to Socrates has a heritage that is both philosophical and removed from the extant writings of Plato and Xenophon.

Both of Socrates' contributions to the censure of wealth imply that wealth is positively bad, since it impedes and corrupts. But other speakers are more direct. Bion in 4.31.87 calls those who pursue wealth laughable. Diogenes in 4.31.88 divides wealth from virtue (not mere enjoyment, as Socrates does). Monimus in 4.31.89 says, "Wealth is the vomit of Fortune." These statements come between Socrates' two statements, immediately before his second. Since Stobaeus directs his intertitles toward the reconciling view that wealth is neither good nor bad, as long as it is acquired justly, it is plausible that he uses Socrates to mediate the more radical opposition to wealth already in the sub-chapter on its censure. At any rate, the juxtaposition of these Cynic views with the views of Socrates shows that his are more moderate than they could be.

In the fourth sub-chapter on wealth, Stobaeus provides 14 excerpts from poetry illustrating his intermediate position and 24 from prose. Socrates speaks first amid the prose entries, saying that wealth, like wine, changes (*summetaballei*) in accord with the character of its possessors (4.31.107), and next that outstanding good fortune does not help the mindless, just as a golden bed does not help the ill (4.31.108). As in chapter 3.1 "On Virtue" and chapter 4.1 "On Government," so here the Socratic entry is not optimally fitted to its Stobaeian context, since the statement is about intelligence more than wealth. Stobaeus apparently expanded the Socratic contribution to this chapter at the expense of stretching his material. In the other two Socratic statements, which close the chapter, Socrates contributes more substantially to the thesis of the sub-chapter, saying that wealth from one's own efforts is most decent (*euschêmonesteros*), just as sweat from gymnastics (4.31.129), and finally that wealth should be committed to fine deeds, like a zealous and unhesitant friend (4.31.130). These statements address the justice of gaining and spending wealth and make a fitting close to the chapter, which contains excerpts from Isocrates' *Nicocles* and *To Demonicus* (four excerpts) and Plato's *Eryxias* and *Republic* as well as sixteen other short prose statements. By measure of placement although not volume, Socrates is the outstanding speaker in this sub-chapter.

84 See Aspasius' commentary on Aristotle, *NE* 1152b8–10 = *SSR* v A 120 and the exposition in Prince 2015, 365–8. There is no certainty that Aspasius' discussion in all its details refers to Antisthenes.

Socrates' continuing presence in 14 of the remaining 25 chapters of the *Anthology*, usually once per chapter, seems to reflect Stobaeus' effort to use him in support of nearly every topic. As in many of the chapters earlier in the *Anthology*, what Socrates contributes to these later chapters is rarely substantial. This suggests that still for Stobaeus in the fifth century CE, Socrates was among the most important of the Greek wise men. When the *Anthology* transmitted pagan wisdom onward to the European medieval period, in the form of material for further anthologies and lists of famous sayings and doctrines, including those that juxtaposed pagans and Christians,⁸⁵ Socrates held his place as a speaker of wisdom outside the pages of Plato and Xenophon. When the content of the *Anthology* was disassembled from Stobaeus' arrangement and reorganized in other forms, posterity was left with just part of what Stobaeus implied about Socrates' place in the scheme of philosophy.

3 Socrates in the Literary Episodes

The fuller literary excerpts featuring Socrates merit special attention without regard to their context in Stobaeus, as these offer the most detailed and unique material about Socrates transmitted in the *Anthology*. The eight longer passages distinguished here are scattered throughout the surviving parts of the *Anthology*. Of the eight attributed simply to Socrates, two are adjacent in chapter 2.31, "On Education and Upbringing," and the others appear separately in four chapters of Book 3—3.3 "On Intelligence," 3.7 "On Courage," 3.17 "On Self-Control," and 3.23 "On Self-Love"—and two chapters of Book 4—4.15 "On Agriculture" and 4.31 "On Wealth." The three excerpts from Aelian and Arrian/Epictetus that are similar in style and length to these pieces appear once in each book, in chapters 2.31 "On Education and Upbringing," 3.22 "On Arrogant Disdain," and 4.33 "Comparison of Poverty and Wealth." The even distribution cannot be interpreted as Stobaeus' intention, since transmission of the *Anthology* is incomplete, but it suggests that these longer excerpts, like the analogies and other apophthegmatic material, were subject to balanced use. These longer passages are generally placed in chapters on virtue rather than vice, although the negative topic in chapter 3.23, over-estimation of one's own worth, appears to deviate from the general pattern in Book 3. The images and settings of four episodes—the marketplace, fruit orchard, farm, and

85 The best known reception of Stobaeus is the *Loci Communes* of pseudo-Maximus of Tyre, where Stobaeus' material is selectively reproduced and combined with Judeo-Christian material: see the overall summary in Searby 2011, 38–40.

theater—are resonant more with Xenophon than Plato and might have origins in lost stories of Socrates told by Aeschines, Antisthenes, or Phaedo. Five of the eight unattributed excerpts have parallels in other sources, but none of these is derived from the other source, and each is plausibly earlier because it includes more detail than the parallel. Three excerpts (2.31.101, 2.3.102, 4.31.90) have been discussed above, and the remaining five are treated here.

Two passages of dialogue preserved in Stobaeus' third book, 3.3.50 and 3.17.16,⁸⁶ present variations on an episode featuring Xanthippe, Socrates' wife, who regrets Socrates' practice of declining the gifts offered by either unspecified friends (in 3.3.50) or Alcibiades (in 3.17.16). This episode, one of several involving Xanthippe transmitted widely,⁸⁷ has a parallel in *Gnom. Vat.* but apparently not elsewhere.⁸⁸ In the simpler version of 3.3.50, which Stobaeus classifies under the intertitle "On Intelligence," Socrates' explanation to Xanthippe appeals to the Cynic practice of begging, known foremost from various stories featuring Diogenes of Sinope:⁸⁹ "If we readily accept all the gifts," Socrates says, "we will have no givers even when we go begging (*aitountes*)." In the more embellished version of 3.17.16, which Stobaeus classifies under the intertitle "On Self-Control," a festival in Athens is supplied as the occasion for Alcibiades' offer of gifts, and he is also given a motive, ambition. Socrates' reply is also more specific: "So then let us counter Alcibiades' ambition by asserting the reverse ambition not to accept what he sent." Each of Socrates' statements evokes the reciprocity in the exchange transaction, which always includes a transaction in power, to justify rejecting the gifts. In the simpler version, Socrates rejects excessive or non-credible gifts, those he does not deserve or did not ask for, so that he can accept gifts on certain other occasions, when

86 Entry 3.17.16 is from Ael. *VH* 9.29 (= *SSR* I C 61), but it appears under the lemma "from Socrates" in the Stobaeus manuscripts. Entry 3.3.50 is nearly identical to *Gnom. Vat.* 486.

87 The Xanthippe legend as preserved consists in several episodes, all preserved in multiple versions. One set explains Socrates' tolerance of her "difficulty" (Xen. *Symp.* 2.9–10; DL 2.37; *SSR* I C 58–9, 64, 66) or demonstrates her difficulty and Socrates' reception (DL 2.36; *SSR* I C 60). In a second set, Socrates teaches Xanthippe why (i) splendid housewares are not necessary for receiving guests (DL. 2.34) or (ii) splendid garments are not necessary for appearing in public (*SSR* I C 62, 63) or, in the present case, (iii) unsolicited gifts should not be accepted. A third set consists in Xanthippe's testimony to Socrates' unperturbable character (*SSR* I C 65 and 349; this cluster includes an episode from Aelian excerpted by Stobaeus in 4.44.77 that has been omitted from this study because Socrates does not speak). The first two episodes in the second set are preserved adjacently in *P.Hib* 2.182, a papyrus dated to the early third century BCE that probably preserves older content. See McOskey 2018.

88 *Gnom. Vat.* 486 is nearly identical to Stob. 3.3.50. Sternbach 1963, 181, cites no parallels beyond Stobaeus.

89 See *SSR* v B 247–65.

he has initiated the exchange himself: he does not want to lose his power to seek gifts appropriately (that is, beg) by incurring debts through gratuitous transactions. In the version involving Alcibiades, Socrates rejects the effort of Alcibiades to gain power over Socrates by constructing a debt on Socrates' part toward himself. Both anecdotes are classified by Stobaeus as demonstrations of Socrates' virtue, the first his intelligence and the second his self-control. The savvy manipulation of the begging gesture, to show the value of a philosopher's teaching and imply that payment is owed, is a trademark of Diogenes of Sinope.⁹⁰ Antisthenes, too, is portrayed by Xenophon in the *Symposium* as attentive to the reciprocity of teaching and payment.⁹¹ As for the Xanthippe legend, connection to Antisthenes is attested also in Xenophon's *Symposium*.⁹²

Stobaeus' chapter 3.7 "On Courage" contains a version of Socrates' rejection of Lysias' defense speech, longer than its parallel dialogue in Diogenes Laertius 2.40–1. Like the conversion of Xenophon and the Xanthippe stories, this episode is variously reported, also in Latin sources.⁹³ The crux of the narrative is an opposition between the rhetorically enhanced composition of Lysias and Socrates' own words, which are presumably less beautiful: in Diogenes' version the speech of Lysias is beautiful (*kalos*) and in Stobaeus' it is an extremely beautiful thing (*kalliston*). In every version, however, the speech of Lysias is unfitting to Socrates. The versions of Diogenes and Cicero compare it to shoes that do not fit.⁹⁴ The difference in Stobaeus' version is that Socrates compares the speech to a rose: the rose is extremely beautiful, but the victory crown is not fitting to it. To fill in what seems to be implied, the thorns on the rose make this beautiful plant unsuitable for constructing a crown, since they would scratch the person wearing it. This metaphor enables a more thorough rejection of Lysias' speech than the other versions. Through the metaphor of the shoes, Lysias' speech may well be fitting for someone, just not for Socrates. The thorny rose is unsuitable for everyone. Lysias offers his speech as a means to winning at trial, and in Stobaeus' episode Lysias is said to claim that without it Socrates will die. (This explains why the episode appears in the chapter

90 On the power exchange and resistance to this in Cynic interactions, see Bosman 2010, 188–90.

91 See Xen. *Sym.* 4.3 = SSR v A 83, 4.56–64 = v A 13.

92 Xen. *Symp.* 2.9–10 = SSR v A 18. The text preserved in *P.Hib* 2.182 begins with two episodes involving Xanthippe, then turns to ethical explanations that can plausibly be connected to Antisthenes. See McOskey 2018.

93 SSR I C 133–6, from Cicero, Quintilian, and Valerius Maximus; in Greek sources, only Diogenes Laertius and Stobaeus report this episode.

94 Comparison between the appropriate life and shoes that fit occurs in the analogies attributed to Socrates: see Stob. 3.1.74 (SSR I C 203). In Cicero's version of the episode (*De or.* 1.231–3 = SSR I C 133), the shoes do fit, but they are too feminine.

on courage, amid a series of other stories of those unafraid to die.) Socrates' metaphor of the rose proleptically integrates the anticipation of winning, that is, becoming the victor who will wear the crown, with the contest in court, to be engaged through the mode of Lysias' speech, which is like a rose in its chief virtue, beauty. Even if this rose should enable winning, it could be the material for no good crown. Therefore, Socrates cannot use the rose. Stobaeus' version of this episode shows no indication of a particular heritage in any school, but it does involve an especially subtle rejection of generalized rhetorical craft, the quality of composition that can be separated from its subject matter, through a metaphorical device that could also be called rhetoric, in modern terms. All versions of the episode agree that Socrates' rejection of Lysias' speech shows his allegiance to philosophical principles and rejection of the superficial victory enabled by rhetorical craft, but Diogenes Laertius' version, for example, belabors the point by using the literal terms *dikanikos* versus *emphilosophos* in Socrates' reply to Lysias. A title in Antisthenes' book catalogue, "On the writers for law courts (*dikographon*) or Balanced-writer and Binder,"⁹⁵ apparently attacks Lysias for his forensic writing, and plausibly this book addressed the defense speech Lysias allegedly offered to Socrates.

The speech attributed to Socrates as the eighth item in chapter 3.23, "On Self-Love," is one of three excerpts, together with 2.31.102 and 4.15.16, that has no recognized parallel outside of Stobaeus. As in 4.15.16, Socrates has no interlocutor and there is no account of the external setting, but within his speech Socrates presents the scenario of a theater where someone asks the crowd to self-identify under various descriptions. For each of three banausic crafts (leather cutters, bronze casters, and weavers), only the appropriate class stands up in response to the speaker's call. But when the speaker calls for the intelligent or just to stand, everyone stands. Socrates draws the moral: "The most harmful thing in life is that the majority, being mindless, believes that they are intelligent." This elitist view of the distribution of intelligence is probably more in accord with the views of a Socratic disciple than Socrates himself, who aspired to speak philosophically with everyone in the marketplace.⁹⁶ The setting of the theater and the mention of banausic crafts suggest an Athenian origin for the story, and Socrates' mention of harm arising from the self-authorized but mindless majority might refer to his Athenian trial. All

95 See *SSR* v A 41 and discussion in Prince 2015, 133–4. "Binder" is apparently a pun on Lysias' name, whose etymology suggests loosening or freeing.

96 Socrates' approach to Euthydemus (*Xen. Mem.* 4.2) and his alleged conversations with Simon the shoemaker, for example, imply his optimism that intelligence is widely distributed.

these factors, including the scornfully superior stance over the majority, can be associated with Antisthenes,⁹⁷ although in consideration of the meager evidence surviving for other first-generation Socratics, no certain conclusion regarding origin can be drawn.

In the excerpt of 4.15.16, finally, a narration of an extended statement by Socrates with no external indication of scene, Socrates offers an interpretation of the mythical name Horn of Amaltheia (*keras Amaltheias*), which in its original mythical setting was a bull's horn given by Zeus as a reward to Amaltheia, the woman who secretly reared him on Crete: from it Amaltheia would get abundant food and drink.⁹⁸ In the discourse of the Athenian theater, the "Horn of Amaltheia" was a term for economic plenty.⁹⁹ Through a clever etymological argument, Socrates analyzes the proper name Amaltheia as the word for "soft" or "lazy" (*malthôn*) preceded by an alpha privative and claims that the property of *amaltheia*, the opposite of laziness, is assigned to the hard worker (*ergatês*). The adjective *malthôn*, hardly attested, must be related to *malthakos*, a standard word for "soft" that often connotes cowardice or lasciviousness, allegedly used by Diogenes of Sinope, for example, to chide Antisthenes for his less than ascetic lifestyle.¹⁰⁰ Both words may be derived from *malthê*, a term for a mixture of wax and resin that was used on writing tablets. Detecting this word behind the proper name Amaltheia is so clever that it is facetious: the word was firmly established as an unanalyzable proper name in Athenian discourse. But this etymology fits right in with the many etymologies Socrates offers for divine names and other terms in Plato's *Cratylus*. (Neither *Cratylus* nor the later etymological handbook of Cornutus or Heraclitus contains an etymology for Amaltheia.) In the Stobaeian excerpt, Socrates reinforces his interpretation of the name Amaltheia with an independent revelation of the same meaning, the hard worker, in the term Horn (*keras*). This interpretation appeals to the verbal device of synecdoche, using a part to signify the whole, not etymology: the bull who grew the horn is a very hard worker (*ergatikôtatos*), and hence the horn indicates (*ensêmainesthai*) this quality. Socrates' discussion is presented by a narrator who uses abstract terminology of exegesis, symbol, and semantics (all

97 On comparison between banausic crafts and justice, see *SSR* v A 78; on the theater, v A 16; on the unjust trial and the role of misjudged wisdom, v A 21; for superiority over potential disciples, v B 19.

98 The myth is best known from later sources like Ovid, but the archaic mythographer Pherecydes reports the benefit of the bull's horn to Amaltheia. See Gantz 1993, 41–2.

99 In the words of a fragment of Aristophanes (fr. 707 *PCG*), "The city is a Horn of Plenty: just make a prayer and everything will be available."

100 See Dio Chrysostom, *Oration* 8.2 (*SSR* v B 584) and Prince 2015, 108 on the term *malthakoteron* (the comparative form).

in cognate Greek terms) not found elsewhere in combination, but resembling the language of Neoplatonic exegetes such as Proclus and Syrianus rather than any writer of the classical period. But the terms within the analysis itself are classical: Cratinus used *malthê* and Aristotle used *ergatikôtatos*. Given the affinity with the etymologies in *Cratylus*, it is plausible that Socrates' exegesis was first narrated by a classical-period author before being noticed in Neoplatonic theoretical discussion.

The message Socrates unveils in this name is common stock of Socratic ethics, but special connections to Antisthenes are evident. First, Antisthenes is on record for clever and revisionist interpretation of compound words through analysis of their parts and recombination of these meanings.¹⁰¹ The message that hard work yields reward is a thought embedded in the ideals of labor (*ponos*) and practice (*askêsis*) at the core of Cynic ethics, which Antisthenes already promoted.¹⁰² Moreover, Ernest Weber discovered a connection between the Socratic interpretation of the Horn of Amaltheia and the lore of Heracles, who by some accounts acquired the Horn of Amaltheia in a trade. A passage in Eustathius of Thessalonica glosses the Horn of Amaltheia as "the unmitigated (*amalthaktos*) resistance of the hero towards labors (*ponous*),"¹⁰³ combining the novel etymology of Amaltheia put forward by Socrates with the labors of Heracles, which Antisthenes had touted as a model for the ethical efforts of the aspiring sage.¹⁰⁴ Plutarch, meanwhile, compares the implausibility of the Stoic Heracles' inner happiness and wealth in the face of external poverty and dependence on others to the implausibility of the opulence of the Horn of Amaltheia according to the poets. The conditions of life Plutarch attributes to the Stoic Heracles, which include begging, are patently Cynic.¹⁰⁵ In combination with the passages from Stobaeus and Eustathius, it seems that Plutarch's comparison between the Horn of Amaltheia and the Stoic claims of abundant reward from self-sufficiency was not far fetched but already constructed in the tradition he received. Socrates' interpretation of the Horn of Amaltheia differs from the possession of Heracles, however, because Socrates' version retains the literal agricultural image of plenty that comes to the farmer who works hard. This must reflect the simpler, more primitive stage of the symbolism, and Antisthenes would be a good candidate for the thinker who contributed the basic etymological step to this development.

101 See *SSR* v A 187 and 189 with Prince 2015, 603–5 and 635–7.

102 See *SSR* v A 85 and 163.

103 Eust. *Commentary on Dionysius Periegetes* at v. 431, examined and compared to the Stobaeus passage in Weber 1887, 256–7.

104 See *SSR* v A 92–9.

105 Plut. *Mor.* 1058c–d (*The Stoics Talk More Paradoxically than the Poets*).

Each of the eight longer episodes or speeches of Socrates in Stobaeus' *Anthology* can be connected with Antisthenes in particular ways. Evidence does not allow so many positive connections to Aeschines, Aristippus, and Euclides, but there is no argument for excluding them from discussion. The greater prominence of Antisthenes himself and Cynic figures such as Diogenes in the *Anthology*, together with apparent dispute over the Cynicizing statements of Socrates, underline the possibility that Stobaeus inherited material about Socrates that made him a spokesman for Cynic thinking.

4 Conclusions

Preliminary conclusions can be drawn regarding the type of Socrates Stobaeus transmits and to some degree creates. First, Socrates' rank as an expert is high enough that he appears six times more frequently than average (assuming 500 authorities in 10,000 entries, that is, 20 statements on average per speaker; many speakers appear fewer than five times), at least once in direct voice in 53 of the 165 sections that are partly extant. If the extant sections of the first book, which is largely devoted to natural philosophy, are omitted from the count, Socrates appears at least once in 52 of 112 sections. This rate of presence is exceeded by Plato, Xenophon, Euripides, and Menander, Stobaeus' four favorite authorities, and Neopythagorean authors if taken as a class. To take some contrasting examples, Homer is cited 60 times, in 39 chapters of the extant 165. Diogenes of Sinope is cited 80 times, in 37 chapters. The Seven Wise Men are cited as a group five times and individually 99 times, with Solon and Thales appearing 16 and 22 times, respectively, and the others (Bias, Chilon, Cleobulus, Periander, and Pittacus, with Anacharsis and Lycurgus sometimes) appearing five to 13 times each.

Second, Socrates is overall a skeptic, and as such he provides certain transitional and mediating roles in Stobaeus' antinomian scheme, whereby opposing theses on the same topic are juxtaposed. This is especially evident in the first book, where he is cited as a skeptic, and in the second, where he seems to help steer the course of the anthology away from *logos* in the rigorous sense. In the third book, Socrates appears as both a hedonist and an ascetic, and it appears that Stobaeus has fortified the first and most general chapter with extra Socratic statements, including the most strongly hedonist ones. If Stobaeus was concerned to reclaim Socrates as a more conventional gentleman than Plato, the Cynics, and even Xenophon would allow, highlighting his endorsements of pleasure would fit this purpose. In the fourth book, Socrates endorses Athenian democratic politics and the shared sovereignty of citizens,

then more subtly supports inherited virtue, while speaking on both sides, and endorses wealth justly acquired as a tool for enabling good actions. Because Socrates often endorses the propositions of Stobaeus' intertitles, especially as they develop particular arguments in Books 2 and 4, it appears that Stobaeus has used Socrates to support his own views.

Third, we have good reason to attribute classical heritage to some of the material about Socrates transmitted by Stobaeus, especially that in the longer episodes and speeches, and good reason to include this material in the most serious explorations of the reception of Socrates not only in the fifth century BCE and beyond, but in the very first generation of Socraticism.

Appendix

Stobaeian intertitle	Socratic saying	SSR number	Length	Form	Tenor	Vehicle	Lexical marker
1.1, Of what essence God is, 1–40	Stob 1.1.29a (Aëtius)	I C 181	9 words	opinion	what is god		ἐρωτηθεῖς
2.1, On the interpretation of divine signs, 1–33	Stob. 2.1.18 (Arius Didymus)	I C 182	17 words	opinion	quest of philosophy		
2.4, <On speech and letters>, 1–19	Stob. 2.4.13 Stob 2.4.14	I C 183 I C 184	16 words 10 words	analogy analogy	life speech (<i>logos</i>)	war sculpting	μέν ... δέ ... ὥσπερ
2.7, <On the ethical form of philosophy>, 1–26	Stob. 2.7.3f (Arius Didymus)	I C 185	4 words	opinion	<i>telos</i> of living		
2.8, On things in our control, 1–48	Stob. 2.8.29	I C 186	13 words	analogy	self-rule	kingship	μέν ... δέ ...

(cont.)

Stobaeon intertitle	Socratic saying	SSR number	Length	Form	Tenor	Vehicle	Lexical marker
2.15, On seeming and being, 1–49	Stob. 2.15.37	I C 187	14 words	question of application	beneficiary of <i>logos</i>		ἐρωτηθεῖς
2.31, On upbringing and education, 1–130	Stob. 2.31.38 (Aelian)	not in SSR	48 words	speech	fathers' responsibility		εἶπε
	Stob. 2.31.44	I C 188	13 words	analogy	education	festival	ἐστὶ
	Stob. 2.31.45	I C 189	21 words	analogy	life	foot race	μέν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 2.31.46	I C 190	10 words	apophthegma	education	gold	ἰδών ... ἔφη ...
	Stob. 2.31.53	I C 191	10 words	analogy	souls	cities	μέν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 2.31.54	I C 192	33 words	question of advice	how to raise sons		ἐρωτηθεῖς
	Stob. 2.31.79	I C 193	19 words	question of definition	what is knowledge		ἐρωτηθεῖς
	Stob. 2.31.85	not in SSR	16 words	analogy	souls	city	μέν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 2.31.98	I C 194	25 words	advice	behavior	external appearance	παρήναι
	Stob. 2.31.99	I C 195	16 words	question of application	what is most pleasant		ἐρωτηθεῖς
	Stob. 2.31.101	I C 196	55 words	episode	conversion of Xenophon		ὁρῶν ... ἠρώτησεν ...
	Stob. 2.31.102	I C 197	78 words	episode	Academic curriculum	farming	ἤρετο
	Stob. 2.31.103	I C 198	9 words	analogy	education	land	καθάπερ
	Stob. 2.31.104 (anon.)	I C 199	22 words	analogy	good council	Electra	μέν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 2.31.105 (anon.)	I C 200	13 words	analogy	life	road	καθάπερ
3.1, On virtue, 1–210	Stob. 3.1.23	I C 201	8 words	advice	consorting with the powerful		παρήναι
	Stob. 3.1.73	I C 202	12 words	analogy	<i>logos</i>	trustee	καθάπερ

(cont.)

Stobaeian intertitle	Socratic saying	SSR number	Length	Form	Tenor	Vehicle	Lexical marker
3.1, On virtue, 1–210	Stob. 3.1.74 (anon.)	I C 203	6 words	analogy	life	shoes	καί ... καί ...
	Stob. 3.1.84	I C 204	26 words	analogy	noble man	noble horse	οὔτε ... οὔτε ...
	Stob. 3.1.85 (anon.)	I C 205	13 words	analogy	wise man	temple	καθάπερ
	Stob. 3.1.86 (anon.)	I C 206	16 words	analogy	living	sailing	μέν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 3.1.87 (anon.)	I C 207	10 words	analogy	wealth	symposium	οὔτε ... οὔτε ...
	Stob. 3.1.88 (anon.)	I C 208	10 words	analogy	life	road	μέν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 3.1.89 (anon.)	I C 209	10 words	analogy	life	statue	καθάπερ
	Stob. 3.1.90 (anon.)	I C 210	14 words	analogy	good man	statue	μέν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 3.1.104	I C 211	11 words	analogy	life	ship	οὔτε ... οὔτε ...
	Stob. 3.1.180	I C 212	21 words	analogy	life	theater	καθάπερ
	Stob. 3.1.181 (anon.)	I C 213	15 words	analogy	good fortune	feast	μέν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 3.1.182 (anon.)	I C 214	19 words	analogy	soul	city	ὥσπερ ... οὕτως ...
	Stob. 3.1.185	I C 215	11 words	analogy	wealth	horse	οὔτε ... οὔτε ...
	Stob. 3.1.186 (anon.)	I C 216	10 words	analogy	life	instrument	ὥσπερ
	Stob. 3.1.187 (anon.)	I C 217	11 words	analogy	praise	incense	<μέν> ... δέ ...
	Stob. 3.1.188 (anon.)	I C 218	19 words	analogy	foul profit	temple robbery	ὁμοιόν τι
	Stob. 3.1.189 (anon.)	I C 219	18 words	precept	those unjustly bearing blame		χρή
	Stob. 3.1.190 (anon.)	I C 220	6 words	precept	what comes about according to craft		χρή

(cont.)

Stobaeon intertitle	Socratic saying	SSR number	Length	Form	Tenor	Vehicle	Lexical marker
3.2, On vice, 1–47	Stob. 3.2.45	I C 221	11 words	analogy	bad judgment	weak anchor	ταυτόν
3.3, On intelligence, 1–66	Stob. 3.3.44	I C 222	16 words	question of definition	intelligence, the intelligent		ἐρωτηθεῖς
	Stob. 3.3.50	I C 223	29 words	episode	Xanthippe		ἐπειδή ... ἔφη ...
	Stob. 3.3.56	I C 224	24 words	analogy	good luck	good weather/ sailing	ὥσπερ ... οὕτως ...
	Stob. 3.3.61	I C 225	11 words	analogy	intelligence	anchor of ship	ὥσπερ
	Stob. 3.3.62 (anon.)	I C 226	16 words	analogy	life	road	ὥσπερ
3.4, On mindlessness, 1–122	Stob. 3.4.55	I C 227	13 words	analogy	lover of fame	coward	μέν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 3.4.56 (anon.)	I C 228	14 words	analogy	the mindless	runaway slaves	μέν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 3.4.57 (anon.)	I C 229	12 words	analogy	good luck	drunkenness	μέν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 3.4.58 (anon.)	I C 230	12 words	analogy	fortune	musical instruments	οὔτε ... οὔτε ...
	Stob. 3.4.59 (anon.)	I C 231	10 words	analogy	the uneducated	actor	καθάπερ
	Stob. 3.4.60 (anon.)	I C 232	11 words	analogy	the mindless	children	ὥσπερ
	Stob. 3.4.61 (anon.)	I C 233	13 words	analogy	the uneducated	foreigners	μέν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 3.4.62 (anon.)	I C 234	8 words	analogy	the uneducated	weak	ταυτόν
	Stob. 3.4.63 (anon.)	I C 235	13 words	analogy	living	sailing	οὔτε ... οὔτε ...
	Stob. 3.4.64 (anon.)	I C 236	13 words	analogy	the uneducated	Proteus	μέν ... δέ ...

(cont.)

Stobaeon intertitle	Socratic saying	SSR number	Length	Form	Tenor	Vehicle	Lexical marker
	Stob. 3.4.65 (anon.)	I C 237	11 words	analogy	good luck	the weak	ὥσπερ ... οὕτως ...
	Stob. 3.4.84	I C 190	10 words	apophthegma	education	gold	ιδῶν ... ἔφη ...
	Stob. 3.4.107	I C 238	14 words	analogy	bad luck	sickness	μέν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 3.4.114	I C 239	13 words	analogy	the mindless	coward	μέν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 3.4.115 (anon.)	I C 240	13 words	analogy	rustic character	harsh wine	οὔτε ... οὔτε ...
	Stob. 3.4.118	I C 241	15 words	analogy	goods of fortune	armor of Achilles	οὔτε ... οὔτε ...
	Stob. 3.4.119 (anon.)	I C 242	9 words	analogy	the mindless	sick	καί
	Stob. 3.4.120 (anon.)	I C 243	12 words	analogy	the mindless	children	μέν ... δέ ...
3.5, On temperance, 1–61	Stob. 3.5.30	I C 244	13 words	analogy	virtue	fatherland	ὥσπερ
	Stob. 3.5.31	I C 245	15 words	question of application	who is wealthiest		πρὸς τὸν πυθόμενον
	Stob. 3.5.32	I C 246	12 words	question of application	what most to avoid		ἐρωτηθεῖς
	Stob. 3.5.33	I C 247	14 words	opinion	minimal needs		ἔλεγεν
	Stob. 3.5.34 (anon.)	I C 248	14 words	analogy	self-sufficiency	road	καθάπερ
	Stob. 3.5.35	I C 249	19 words	precept	self-sufficiency		δεῖν
3.6, On licentiousness, 1–68	Stob. 3.6.14	I C 250	9 words	analogy	bad error	fire	οὔτε ... οὔτε ...
	Stob. 3.6.15 (anon.)	I C 251	11 words	analogy	love	fire	μέν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 3.6.16	I C 252	24 words	analogy	adulterers	water drinkers	ὁμοίον τι
3.7, On courage, 1–76	Stob. 3.7.15	I C 253	9 words	question of definition	strength		ἐρωτηθεῖς
	Stob. 3.7.56	I C 254	54 words	episode	defense at trial		

(cont.)

Stobaeon intertitle	Socratic saying	SSR number	Length	Form	Tenor	Vehicle	Lexical marker
3.10, On injustice and greed, 1–77	Stob. 3.10.46	I C 255	16 words	question of application	who most love money		ἐρωτηθεῖς
	Stob. 3.10.54	I C 256	8 words	analogy	the greedy	wine	μὲν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 3.10.55	I C 257	10 words	analogy	the greedy	a corpse	οὔτε ... οὔτε ...
3.13, On frankness, 1–68	Stob. 3.13.61	I C 258	8 words	analogy	frankness	the seasons	ὥσπερ
	Stob. 3.13.62	I C 259	8 words	analogy	frankness	knife	οὔτε ... οὔτε ...
	Stob. 3.13.63	I C 260	13 words	analogy	frankness	the sun	οὔτε ... οὔτε ...
	Stob. 3.13.64	I C 261	12 words	analogy	frank speaking	good health	ὥσπερ ... οὕτως ...
3.14, On flattery, 1–26	Stob. 3.14.21	I C 262	10 words	analogy	flattery	weather	καθάπερ
	Stob. 3.14.22	I C 263	15 words	analogy	flattery	rabbit hunting	μὲν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 3.14.23	I C 264	14 words	analogy	flatterers	wolves	μὲν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 3.14.24	I C 265	13 words	analogy	flattery	painted armor	ἔοικεν
3.15, On prodigality, 1–13	Stob. 3.15.8	I C 266	19 words	apophthegma	ruin of the Graces		ἰδὼν ... ἔφη ...
3.16, On stinginess, 1–30	Stob. 3.16.27	I C 267	14 words	analogy	life of the greedy	dinner of a corpse	ἔοικε
	Stob. 3.16.28	I C 268	15 words	analogy	wealth of the greedy	sun below horizon	ὥσπερ
3.17, On self-control, 1–44	Stob. 3.17.16 (Aelian)	I C 61	38 words	episode	Xanthippe		
	Stob. 3.17.21	I C 269	20 words	apophthegma	eating to live		ἐρωτηθεῖς
	Stob. 3.17.27	I C 270	10 words	definition	self-control		ἔφη

(cont.)

Stobaeian intertitle	Socratic saying	SSR number	Length	Form	Tenor	Vehicle	Lexical marker
	Stob 3.17.30	I C 271	13 words	question of advice	how to become wealthy		ἐρωτηθεῖς
3.21, On the proverb "Know thyself," 1–28	Stob. 3.21.9	I C 272	15 words	question, personal	why he does not write		ἐρωτηθεῖς
3.22, On arrogant disdain, 1–46	Stob. 3.22.33 (Aelian)	I C 34	73 words	episode	Alcibiades' land		
	Stob 3.22.35	I C 273	14 words	analogy	arrogant man	sculptor	καθάπερ
	Stob 3.22.36	I C 274	7 words	analogy	arrogance	father	καθάπερ
	Stob 3.22.37	I C 275	13 words	analogy	the mindless	windbags	μέν ... δέ ...
	Stob 3.22.38	I C 276	9 words	question of application	who are the vulgar		ἐρωτηθεῖς
3.23, On self-love, 1–18	Stob. 3.23.8	I C 277	45 words	speech	self-election of the intelligent and just		ἔλεγεν
3.24, On conscience, 1–16	Stob. 3.24.13	I C 278	11 words	question of application	who live without distress		ἐρωτηθεῖς
3.29, On being hardworking, 1–103	Stob 3.29.68	I C 279	20 words	apophthegma	late learning		εἶπεν
3.34, On speaking at the right moment, 1–19	Stob. 3.34.18	I C 280	7 words	analogy	humor	salt	καθάπερ
3.37, On goodnatured- ness, 1–37	Stob. 3.37.26	I C 281	11 wrds	analogy	good will	clothing	μέν ... δέ ...

(cont.)

Stobaeon intertitle	Socratic saying	SSR number	Length	Form	Tenor	Vehicle	Lexical marker
3.38, On envy, 1–59	Stob. 3.38.34	I C 282	11 words	analogy	envy	disease	ὥσπερ
	Stob. 3.38.35	I C 283	18 words	analogy	fame	sunshine	μέν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 3.38.48	I C 284	6 words	definition	envy	wound	εἶπεν
3.41, On secrets, 1–10	Stob. 3.41.5	I C 285	12 words	implied analogy	secret	burning coal	ἔλεγεν
4.1, On government, 1–161	Stob. 4.1.47	I C 286	13 words	analogy	good luck	political association	ὥσπερ
	Stob. 4.1.82	I C 287	15 words	question of application	what city is best managed		ἐρωτηθεῖς
	Stob. 4.1.83	I C 288	13 words	question of application	what city is lawless		ἐρωτηθεῖς
	Stob. 4.1.84	I C 289	11 words	question of application	what city is strongest		ἐρωτηθεῖς
	Stob. 4.1.85	I C 290	27 words	question of application	who should hold office		ἐρωτηθεῖς
4.7, Precepts on kingship, 1–76	Stob. 4.7.26	I C 291	11 words	opinion	superior king		ἔλεγεν
4.15, On agriculture, 1–32	Stob. 4.15a.16	I C 292	74 words	speech	hard worker	Horn of Plenty	ἐξηγούμενος
4.22, On marriage, 1–209	Stob. 4.22b.59	I C 293	9 words	question of application	who has regrets		ἐρωτηθεῖς
4.23, Precepts on marriage, 1–65	Stob. 4.23.58	I C 294	17 words	analogy	women obey men	men obey laws	μέν ... δέ ...

(cont.)

Stobaeon intertitle	Socratic saying	SSR number	Length	Form	Tenor	Vehicle	Lexical marker
4.25, Obedience to parents, 1–54	Stob. 4.25.42	I C 295	6 words	analogy	ignorant father	harsh law	καθάπερ
4.26, Fathers’ treatment of children, 1–29	Stob. 4.26.22	I C 296	11 words	analogy	punishment	sweet drug	<ἐστί>
4.27, Brotherly love, 1–26	Stob. 4.27.20 (Hierocles)	I C 297	31 words	apophthegma	persistence with brother		ἔφη
4.29, On good birth, 1–62	Stob. 4.29a.20	I C 298	9 words	question of definition	nobility		ἐρωτηθεῖς
	Stob. 4.29a.23	I C 299	32 words	analogy	good man	good grain	οὔτε ... οὔτε ...
4.30, On base birth, 1–13	Stob. 4.30.12	I C 300	20 words	apophthegma	class of birth		ἔφη
4.31, On wealth 1–130	Stob. 4.31c.83	I C 301	13 words	analogy	wealth	long garments	μέν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 4.31c.90	I C 302	39 words	speech	wealth versus joy		εἶπε
	Stob. 4.31d.107	I C 303	13 words	analogy	wealth	wine	μέν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 4.31d.108	I C 304	12 words	analogy	the senseless	the weak	οὔτε ... οὔτε ...
	Stob. 4.31d.129	I C 305	14 words	analogy	wealth	sweat	μέν ... δέ ...
	Stob. 4.31d.130	I C 306	13 words	analogy	wealth	friend	ὥσπερ
4.32, On poverty, 1–45	Stob. 4.32a.18	I C 307	5 words	definition	poverty		εἶναι

(cont.)

Stobaeon intertitle	Socratic saying	SSR number	Length	Form	Tenor	Vehicle	Lexical marker
4.33, Comparison of poverty and wealth, 1–34	Stob. 4.33.28 (Arrian/ Epictetus)	I C 311	99 words	speech	rebuff of Archelaus		ἐκέλευσεν
4.34, On life, 1–75	Stob. 4.34.69	I C 308	20 words	opinion	vainglory		ἔλεγε
4.35, On pain, 1–35	Stob 4.35.35	I C 309	22 words	question of advice	avoidance of pain		ἐρωτηθεῖς
4.36, On sickness, 1–32	Stob. 4.36.9	I C 310	7 words	question of definition	sickness		ἐρωτηθεῖς
4.37, On health, 1–30	Stob. 4.37.20	I C 312	17 words	advice	eating and drinking		παρήνει
4.39, On happiness, 1–30	Stob 4.39.18 Stob 4.39.19	I C 313 I C 314	7 words 12 words	question of definition question of application	happiness who are happy		ἐρωτηθεῖς ἐρωτηθεῖς
4.41, Human prosperity is unsure, 1–63	Stob. 4.41.58	I C 315	11 words	analogy	good luck	slippery road	τάυτόν
4.44, We must endure our lot, 1–84	Stob 4.44.74	I C 316	19 words	statement	death of son		ἔφη
4.45, One must display good fortune, 1–10	Stob. 4.45.9	I C 317	31 words	analogy	life	athletic games	τάυτόν

(cont.)

Stobaean intertitle	Socratic saying	SSR number	Length	Form	Tenor	Vehicle	Lexical marker
4.46, On hope, 1–26	Stob. 4.46.21 Stob 4.46.26	1 C 318 1 C 319	11 words 12 words	analogy analogy	hopes hopes	tour guides woman	ὥσπερ οὔτε ... οὔτε ...
4.48, Behavior toward those suffering misfortune, 1–31	Stob. 4.48b.31	1 C 320	10 words	analogy	bad luck	the ill	μέν ... δέ ...
4.50, On old age, 1–95	Stob. 4.50.93	1 C 321	9 words	analogy	old age	winter	μέν ... δέ ...
4.51, On death, 1–32	Stob. 4.51.23	1 C 322	14 words	precept	death		χρή
4.53, Comparison of life and death, 1–40	Stob 4.53.39	1 C 323	19 words	analogy	life	theater	καθάπερ
4.55, On burial, 1–21	Stob. 4.55.10 (Aelian)	not in SSR	20 words	question, personal	burial		τῶν ... ἐρομένων
4.56, Consolations, 1–43	Stob 4.56.39	1 C 324	22 words	analogy	life	dice game	ἔοικε

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Syriac Reception of Socrates

Ute Pietruschka

1 Syriac Interest in Greek Philosophy

Contacts between the Greek and the Aramaic-speaking world were close throughout the Hellenistic period. The Christianization of the Eastern Mediterranean strengthened the cultural ties between the adherents of the new faith in the two linguistic areas. Early Syriac Christianity was a learned, well-educated community that was, at the end of the seventh century CE, heavily Hellenized.¹ The Syrian elites—among them clerics and well-educated monks—certainly received a Greek education. Admittedly, the references to Greek learning are few; but this fact may indicate that Greek education was so common that it was taken for granted in the sources.² Ecclesiastical institutions and schools, for example the School of Nisibis and the School of Persians in Edessa (for the Church of the East), but also monasteries and monastic schools such as Qenneshre on the Euphrates (for the West Syrians), were intellectual centers that fostered and disseminated Greek learning in a predominantly Aramaic-speaking region, a process that lasted well until the end of the late antique period and the beginning of the Islamic era.³ Bilingualism in Greek and Aramaic remained a significant feature of Syrian culture; Syriac-speaking Christians therefore played an important role as intermediaries of Greek philosophy to the Muslims, especially during the so-called Greek-Arabic translation movement in ‘Abbāsid Baghdad from the middle of the eighth until the tenth century CE.⁴ This translation movement took on a rich life of its own, and the Arabic study of Greek philosophical works went far beyond the study

1 Brock 1982; Drijvers 1966, 52–3.

2 Syriac hagiographic sources reflect an ambivalent attitude towards Greek learning; frequently, the full extent of the classical education of their protagonists is underplayed in order to heighten their ascetic (or monastic) virtues; sometimes, however, the Greek educational background is evident. Cf. Peeters 1950. See now Gemeinhardt, Van Hoof et al. 2016 on a re-evaluation of the monastic education, esp. Rigoglio 2016; King 2016.

3 See Becker 2006, ch. 3–4, on the East Syriac School movement; Brock 2015, 109–10. On the literary production in Syriac monasteries: Debié 2010.

4 On the Greek-Arabic translation movement, see the profound study of Gutas 1998 (though underplaying the Syriac contribution to this movement), for the Syriac contribution Hugonnard-Roche 2000 and 2011, and Brock 2004a.

of Greek philosophy that is to be found among Syriac Christians in the sixth and seventh centuries.⁵

Hellenization was an important factor for the rise of Syriac literary culture. Beginning with the fourth century CE, and continuing into Islamic times, a large number of translations from Greek into Syriac were made. Biblical and Patristic texts, ecclesiastical histories, and homiletic and ascetic literature were first chosen for translation into Syriac and formed the main body of translations. With the beginning of the sixth century CE, philosophical studies, already in Greek late antiquity closely associated with medical studies, found their way into the Syriac tradition together with medicine. The interest of the Syrians in Greek philosophy and medicine is in pre-Islamic times most evident in their engagement with the works of Aristotle and Galen. The physician and priest Sergius of Resh'ayna (d. 536 CE)⁶ represents best the link between philosophy and medicine that can be observed not only among Syriac scholars of the sixth and seventh centuries, but also more than two centuries later in the 'Abbāsid caliphate. Sergius, who studied in Alexandria and translated many treatises of Galen, one of Alexander of Aphrodisias (*On the Principles of the All*), and the pseudo-Aristotelian *De Mundo*,⁷ was the first known Syriac commentator on Aristotle. He intended to comment on the entire Aristotelian corpus, from the *Categories* to the *Metaphysics*, but only his commentary on the *Categories* is extant. As Sergius emphasizes in his introduction to the logical works of Aristotle, without them one can grasp neither the meaning of medical and philosophical writings nor "the true sense of the divine scriptures."⁸ The appreciation of Aristotle's *Organon* for the training in logic that gives access to all areas of knowledge is reflected in several translations and commentaries by important Syriac Aristotelian scholars of the seventh century. Severus Sebokht (d. 666 or 667 CE) wrote on *De interpretatione* and *Prior Analytics*;⁹ Athanasius of Balad (d. 687 CE) translated Porphyry's *Isagoge*, the *Prior Analytics*, *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics*, and *Sophistical Refutations*, and wrote an introduction to logic;¹⁰ Jacob of Edessa (d. 708 CE) made a new translation of the *Categories*;¹¹ and George, bishop of the Arabs (d. 724 CE),

5 For aspects of the Arabic Socrates, see Wakelnig (in this volume).

6 Hugonnard-Roche 1989.

7 On Sergius and his translations, see Hugonnard-Roche 2004, 123–31; Teixidor 2003, 20–2; Brock 2004a, 4.

8 Hugonnard-Roche 1997, 81–3 and Hugonnard-Roche 2004, 143–231, with a translation of the introduction and the first chapter.

9 Reinink 2011, 368.

10 Penn 2011, 46.

11 Salvesen 2011, 432–3.

translated again the *Categories*, *De Interpretatione* and *Prior Analytics*.¹² The translation of Aristotle's works had a dynamic impact on the development of theological thought in both branches of the Syriac-speaking Church, the Church of the East and the West-Syrian Miaphysite communities. We have no direct evidence for the study of Aristotelian philosophy in Syriac monastic schools or in the East-Syrian school movement. However, from the activities of the aforementioned scholars, all of them affiliated with the monastic school of Qenneshre, we can indirectly conclude that Aristotelian logic was part of the teaching curriculum at this school.¹³ Besides the works of Aristotle, the translation activities of the Syrians embraced the writings of the Neo-Platonists Porphyry and Plotinus as well as popular practical and moral philosophical texts.¹⁴ There is, however, one striking gap in philosophical texts transmitted in Syriac: in contrast to Aristotle, the genuine works of Plato are not transmitted; only pseudo-Platonic works found their way into Syriac,¹⁵ including a little collection of (pseudo-)Platonic *Horoi*, preserved in a manuscript from the seventh century CE, which is in fact a somewhat different version of the *Horoi* transmitted in Greek.¹⁶ The apparently well-appreciated *Instruction of Plato to his disciple*—there are at least three Syriac manuscripts dated from the seventh to the ninth centuries CE—has no counterpart in Greek.¹⁷ The same is true for some sayings attributed to Plato preserved in early Syriac manuscripts.¹⁸

How to explain the near absence of Plato is still under discussion. A very convincing explanation is the role that the corpus of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite played in the Syriac theological thought. It is striking that Sergius of Resh'ayna translated this corpus, and many Syriac scholars engaged in Aristotelian logic were also interested in pseudo-Dionysius.¹⁹ As Christians they were critical of the paganism of the Platonic theology and more sympathetic to the Christian recasting of the Platonic theology in pseudo-Dionysius,²⁰ a

12 Brock 2011, 177–8.

13 On the monastery of Qenneshre as center of Greek studies, Hugonnard-Roche 2011, 59–61; Watt 2013, 37.

14 On early Syriac translations from Greek, see Takahashi 2010, 32–5.

15 Brock 2003, 10. Several genuine works of Plato did get translated into Armenian: Thomson 1995, 78; 2007, 177.

16 Ed. Sachau 1870, 66–7. Critical edition of the Greek text: Souilhé 1962, 151–73.

17 Ed. Sachau 1870, 67–69. English translation in Brock 2012, 25–26.

18 E.g., MS Sinai Syr. 14, see Brock 2012. For a small number of Plato quotations in Anton of Tagrit's *Rhetoric*, see Lanz 1968, 129–34.

19 Athanasius of Balad also made a translation of pseudo-Dionysius; Jacob of Edessa used Dionysius in his *Hexaameron* (Watt 2013, 41).

20 Perczel 2000.

“Plato christianus” in a curriculum that joins it with Aristotle’s logic.²¹ This close association of Aristotle and pseudo-Dionysius appears later in Christian Arabic philosophical and apologetic tracts of the tenth century CE.²²

As already stated, the Syriac tradition was largely a Greco-Syriac one; the bilingual scholars had Greek and Syriac texts at their disposal and could therefore read what was apparently not translated into Syriac.²³ It seems that translations of Greek philosophical writings were often intended for students who were content with a cursory reading of Greek philosophy or those who were more at home with Syriac than Greek.²⁴ With regard to the transmission of Greek writings that provide information on Socrates, it would be, however, arbitrary to deduce from surviving Syriac manuscripts that Syrian intellectuals had no access to the authentic Platonic works. This becomes clear from one of the earliest pieces of Syriac literature, the *Book of the Laws of Countries*,²⁵ attributed to Bardaiṣan (154–222 CE),²⁶ which is a philosophical dialogue on fate modeled after Plato’s work, implying that its author and his audience knew it.²⁷

Extant translations of Greek philosophical works apparently constitute only a small proportion of the original number. Fortunately enough, about 140 old Syriac manuscripts from the sixth to tenth centuries CE containing philosophical texts survived, thanks especially to the dry climate of Egypt and the Sinai.²⁸ Most of them stem from the monastic library of Dayr al-Suryān, situated in the desert between Alexandria and Cairo, and are now preserved in the Vatican Library and the British Library. Of course, this library’s holdings were certainly not representative of the whole spectrum of Syriac literature that was still extant in manuscripts by the end of the tenth century CE; still, we have a rough idea what might have been available to Syriac readers at that time. There are two manuscripts from Dayr al-Suryān that are particularly rich in translations of Greek popular philosophy, one of the seventh century (BL Add. 14658), the other of the ninth century (BL Add. 17209). BL Add. 14658²⁹ contains philosophical treatises translated from Greek into Syriac by

21 Bettiolo 2005, 98.

22 Sbath 1929, 10–11.

23 On bilingualism, see Brock 1994, 154–6; Taylor 2002.

24 King 2010, 14.

25 Ed. Cureton 1855; Nau 1931.

26 Teixidor 2003; Drijvers 1966, 186–7.

27 Ramelli 2009, 22, 184 on the influence of Plato’s Timaeus.

28 Brock 2004b, 18.

29 Ms. BL Add. 14658, see Wright 1870–1872, 3.1154–60, describing the content of the manuscript.

the famous Sergius of Resh'ayna or composed by himself; the *Book of the Laws of Countries* and popular philosophical tracts, such as the *Letter of Mara bar Serapion*, a Pseudo-Socratic dialogue (see below); and collections of sayings attributed to wise men such as Pythagoras, Menander, and Plato. We can interpret this manuscript as a sort of encyclopedia of popular philosophy, compiled by a learned Syrian in the sixth/seventh centuries CE.³⁰ It is striking that we get our knowledge about Greco-Syriac philosophical writings to a large extent from similar composed miscellanies (anthologies) containing texts ranging from philosophical treatises to narrative texts to collections of sayings. Apparently these miscellanies were used as textbooks in monastic schools or for edifying reading in a monastic milieu.

We can currently only speculate about the manuscripts and the readers of Plato's early dialogues in pre-Islamic Syria that were fundamental to all subsequent images of Socrates. Did the restricted transmission of Platonic writings in Syriac affect the information about the life of Socrates and dissemination of Socratic teachings among the Syrians? Ancient non-Platonic sources such as Aristophanes's *Clouds*³¹ or Xenophon's *Memorabilia*³² that provide information about the life of Socrates never made their way into Syriac. There is some additional material to be found in Aristotle's *Categories*, translated into Syriac, where the person Socrates is used as an example in logical statements,³³ and in the Syriac doxographical and gnomological tradition.

Examining the early Syriac manuscripts that came down to us and contain material about this philosopher, we will show in this chapter which images of Socrates were transmitted in the Syriac literature until the tenth century CE (the end of the translation movement) and how we can interpret them in the wider context of the late antique reception of Socrates.

2 Socrates as *paradeigma*

With the rise of Christianity, it was the character and personality of Socrates rather than his philosophy that appealed most strongly to the Greek and Latin authors.³⁴ He came to be remembered as a *paradeigma/exemplum* of the philosopher who even in his death set an example of a life devoted to

30 Hugonnard-Roche 2007, 280–1, on the content of this manuscript. See also Hugonnard-Roche 2004.

31 Nancy 2016, 411–3.

32 O'Connor 2011, 48–50.

33 E.g., King 2010, 159–60 (13b10ff).

34 Harnack 1904; Geffken 1908.

the pursuit of wisdom.³⁵ The prominence of ethics and the interest in morals in the predominant philosophical schools (Stoicism, Pythagoreanism, and Neoplatonism)³⁶ were shaping factors favoring the personality of a rather ascetic Socrates who disdained the pleasures of life, scorned worldly goods, and sacrificed himself in defense of virtue. In the popular philosophy of Stoic-Cynic provenance, anecdotes about and sayings by Socrates played from the beginning an important role for transmitting his image in the subsequent centuries.³⁷ In the second half of the second century CE this image evolved into a rigid pattern that continued to exist in the portrayal of Christian martyrs and apologists.³⁸

Syrian intellectuals must have had access to Greek gnomic collections that disseminated the above-described portrayal of Socrates as a wise instructor who offers moral and ethical advice and often resembles an ascetic. The image of the philosopher provided in these collections was crucial for the reception of Socrates.³⁹ “Socrates as paradeigma” became the most important and widespread form of the reception of Socrates among the Syrians. It can be seen as a form of philosophical instruction, especially in writings for a wider audience, conveyed by using examples that serve as paragons for their own way of life,⁴⁰ as Socrates did for a Christian readership.

Special attention should be given to the *Letter of Mara bar Sarapion to his Son*,⁴¹ one of the earliest surviving Syriac philosophical texts, composed at the end of the second or beginning of the third century CE. It reflects the aforementioned portrait of Socrates. Discussions of this intriguing document remain controversial, more than 150 years after its first edition.⁴² It should probably be regarded as a popular philosophical work intended for instruction in popular philosophy with an emphasis on ethical or rhetorical formation.⁴³

The *Letter* purports to have been written by a certain Mara bar Serapion suffering in a Roman prison, and is intended as a letter of advice and

35 Frede 2006, 190.

36 On Socrates in Hellenistic philosophy, see Long 2001; Narcy 2016; see Layne 2016 on the Christian reception of Socrates.

37 Döring 1979, 13; Brouwer 2014, 137–45.

38 Döring 1979, 17; Frede 2006.

39 Halkin 1944; Strohmaier 1974; Alon 1991, esp. 32–40; Jolivet 1995.

40 Cf. Döring 1979, 12.

41 First edition and translation by Cureton 1855; German translation by Schulthess 1897. Concise overview: Van Rompay 2011, 266. A new edition and translation by Rensberger (forthcoming). See also the proceedings of a symposium, “The *Letter of Mara bar Sarapion* in Context”: Merz and Tieleman 2012.

42 For an overview, see Merz and Tieleman 2012, 1–9.

43 McVey 1990, 264; Chin 2009, 149.

consolation: Mara counsels his son to spend his life in pursuit of wisdom, learning, and virtue, and to avoid the desire for wealth and worldly goods (§23).⁴⁴ In §§13 and 18 of the letter Mara gives a list of *exempla* illustrating the veracity of his advice that shows his familiarity with Greek culture, Greek philosophical tradition, and rhetorical conventions.

Mara describes possessions as not enduring and not very reliable:

Let a man rejoice, therefore, because of his kingdom like Darius, or in his good fortune like Polycrates,⁴⁵ or in his courage like Achilles, or in his wife like Agamemnon, or in his offspring like Priam, or in his skill like Archimedes, or in his wisdom like Socrates, or in his learning like Pythagoras, or in his brilliance like Palamedes. Human life departs from the world, my son, but praises and virtues remain forever.

Letter of Mara bar Sarapion to his Son §13

In this passage, Mara makes clear that worldly goods perish with their owners; lasting values such as wisdom, learning, and enlightenment, however, promise everlasting fame and immortality.

Later, Mara gives *exempla* of people who were persecuted and suffered an undeserved death and addresses divine justice and providence. Again, he mentions Socrates and Pythagoras and adds as a third *exemplum* no pagan philosopher, but Jesus:

What else is there for us to say, then, since wise men are oppressed by tyrants, and their wisdom is taken captive by slander, and they are cheated of their brilliance without defense? What, then, did they gain? The Athenians by the murder of Socrates, since they were repaid with famine and plague? Or the Samians by the burning of Pythagoras, since in a total of one hour their country was covered with sand? Or the Jews of their wise king, since from that time their kingdom was captured? Therefore, God justly repaid the wisdom of the three of them ... Socrates has not died because of Plato, nor Pythagoras because the statue of Hera,⁴⁶ nor the wise king because of the new laws that he established.⁴⁷

Letter of Mara bar Sarapion to his Son §18

44 Schulthess 1897, 374.

45 Tyrant of Samos, c. 538–522 BCE.

46 Schulthess 1897, 372; also Döring 1979, 144 n. 9.

47 Cureton 1855, Syriac text 10–20, English translation 73–4. Translation: McVey 2015, 312–13.

The immortal legacy of the persecuted philosophers and wise men constitutes his reward: for Socrates the Platonic dialogues, for Pythagoras (here apparently a confusion with the sculptor Pythagoras of Samos) his statue of the goddess, and for Jesus the New Testament.⁴⁸ The choice of Socrates, Pythagoras, and Jesus as exemplars of philosophic life suggests a Neoplatonic authorship, possibly taking up passages in Origen's *Contra Celsum* where Pythagoras and Socrates are mentioned as the philosophers par excellence and where Origen associates the execution of Socrates, Pythagoras, and "other philosophers" with the persecution of Christians.⁴⁹

The theme of the dying philosopher, idealized as the crowning glory of a philosophical life, originated in the Socratic circle and became a standard *topos* in the Greek biographical literature,⁵⁰ which was soon adapted by Christian writers. The Christian estimate of Socrates during the early centuries agreed with that of the pagan thinkers. Clement of Alexandria and Origen recognized the affinity between Socratic and Christian ethics and did not hesitate to draw a comparison between Socrates and Jesus.⁵¹ Justin Martyr (d. 165 CE) introduced a comparison between Socrates and Christ (II *Apol.* 10.7) and established an analogy between them (but also, implicitly, between the Christian martyrs): Socrates died, like Christ, because he gave his life for the belief in the one true God and refused to worship the traditional gods. Justin was convinced that Socrates partially knew Christ, because he followed Christ in following reason (I *Apol.* 46,2–4), and knew that there is only one Creator and Father. Socrates, however, as other pagan philosophers, could see only a part of the Truth. Only through the incarnation of Christ does the whole Truth become available to human beings. Justin thinks of Christian doctrine as the true philosophy and thus superior to pagan philosophy. The comparison of Socrates and Christ seems to have spread into popular moralizing preaching.⁵² The same historical construction of pagan philosophers as (imperfect) forerunners of Christians is later to be found in Syriac historiographical and theological works as we will see later on.

The analogy of Socrates and Christ is reflected not only in literary works of the Syrians, but also in their figurative representations. An intriguing visualization of this idea is a mosaic (probably from the fourth century), excavated

48 McVey 1990, 266.

49 Origen *C. Cels.* 3.25 and 1.3.

50 See Dihle 1970, and especially Ntinti 2012, on Mara bar Sarapion.

51 About the role of Socrates among the early Christians: Harnack 1904; Geffken 1908, 22, 40. For other representative Christian authors, see Döring 1979, 143–161; Frede 2006.

52 Scott 1928, 52.



FIGURE 18.1 Socrates as teacher of six disciples, Apamea in Syria (fourth century CE), Apamea Museum

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in Apamea on the Orontes, then an important center of philosophical studies in Syria (fig. 18.1).⁵³ It depicts Socrates with the “teaching gesture” instructing six disciples.

A significant aspect of this mosaic lies in its striking resemblance to early Christian representations of Christ with six apostles (fig. 18.2). The representation of seven sages—a philosopher as teacher and his six disciples—was obviously adopted by Christian artists and established as a type for the portrayal of Jesus as the teacher of Truth, the Christian faith that constitutes the true philosophy.

The mosaic thus illustrates the role of philosophy in shaping the image of Christ as a teacher and philosophic sage that fits well with the portrait of Socrates as a proto-Christian.⁵⁴ This image is to be found also in the only preserved pseudo-Socratic dialogue in Syriac, to which I now turn.

53 On this mosaic in detail: Hanfmann 1951.

54 Hanfmann 1951, 222.



FIGURE 18.2 Jesus and six disciples, Catacombs of Priscilla (c. 200–250 CE)
©ARTSTOR SLIDE GALLERY

3 (Pseudo-)Socrates on the Soul

The familiarity of Syriac writers with Platonic dialogues and the personality of Socrates is also attested in a didactic dialogue between Socrates and a certain Erosthophus dealing with the nature of the soul.⁵⁵ It is preserved in the manuscript from Dayr al-Suryān that contains the letter of Mara bar Sarapion (Ms. BL Add. 14658).⁵⁶ Most researchers agree that the text was translated from Greek; the syntax of the Syriac text seems to follow the Greek original very closely. Therefore this text might belong to the phase of a strict literalism of translations (so-called “mirror-translations”) from Greek into Syriac during the sixth/seventh centuries.⁵⁷ The name “Erosthophus” is probably a misreading of the name “Aristippus,” the first-generation Socratic, as Ryssel⁵⁸ once suggested and Rigolio has corroborated.⁵⁹ If we judge this the correct identification, then

55 On Socratic dialogues, see Rossetti 2011.

56 Edition by Lagarde 1858, 158–67. Translation into German by Ryssel 1896. Apart from Newbold 1918, 99, there is a consensus that the original of the text was Greek (Brock 2003, 11; Hugonnard-Roche 2000). For a recent detailed discussion of the dialogue, see Rigolio 2017.

57 Brock 1983, 11.

58 Ryssel 1896.

59 Rigolio 2017, 25–8.

the dialogue “may have been a deliberate attempt to write a pseudo-epigraphic philosophical dialogue on the soul relying on the same literary traditions of which Plutarch and Diogenes Laertius were aware.”⁶⁰

The main theme of this dialogue is the nature of the soul and its relation to the body. The tone of the dialogue is very didactic; it is not a Socratic dialogue in the true sense of the word, but a monologue in which Socrates answers Erostraphus’ questions at length. Socrates begins with an explanation of the term “Power” as unmovable and everlasting (161.8). Its creative faculty is to be identified as a divine principle and is related (or identified) as the “primal (original) Root” (161.11). This “Root” (or “Power”) is in everything and the final cause of “all” (162.9). Socrates describes the relation of body and soul by saying that “the soul without a body would be both invisible and unmovable” (162.15). The body itself, made up of the Power, the four elements, and their mixture, is visible (162.17). The first among the four elements is fire, and fire nourishes the soul. Using the example of the sun and its impact on nature and human beings, Socrates explains the priority of fire (163.17–19) and its essentialness for the soul. The soul’s nature depends upon the proportions in which the four elements are combined and in particular upon the amount of fire present. Finally, Socrates gives a definition of the soul: “The mixture of the four elements, and the mingling of one with the others, should be seen as and called soul” (165.25). According to Socrates, the soul has its origin in the Power; it holds a “seed” of Power in itself (166.24); and is therefore everlasting (166.5). Socrates closes with a short ethical exhortation and advises Erostraphus to turn away from worldly desires in order to be able to turn towards something higher (167.1).

We cannot readily identify the ideas in the Erostraphus dialogue with a specific philosophical school. Some of the doctrines outlined in the dialogue are close to Aristotelian philosophy (i.e., the doctrine of a soul immovable without the body: Arist. *Phys.* 259b16–20), whereas other ideas stem apparently from the Galenic tradition (i.e., the soul as a mixture of four elements: Gal. *De propr. plac.* 15.2). The statements about fire as the first element resemble the Stoic concept of the fire as primary substance in the Universe (i.e., Zeno’s: Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.22). Because of the eclectic compilation it might be assumed that the author of this dialogue obtained his knowledge about the subjects discussed from doxographies or collections of philosophical sayings (gnomologia), a popular genre in late antiquity.⁶¹

60 Rigolio 2017, 27. Diogenes Laertius attributes a writing “on Socrates” to Aristippus (2.84).

61 On increased attention to issues of the “soul” in Syriac during the eighth and ninth centuries, see Reller 1995, 56–7.

4 Socrates as Ascetic

Syriac Christian writers mention Socrates as exemplary for his lifestyle and express their enthusiasm for Greek philosophy and pagan heritage. The monk Dawid bar Pawlos (eighth century CE) believed that all wisdom derives from the Greeks. He lists in a poem several Greek philosophers, among them Socrates, and puts them in a biblical context:

Above all the Greeks is the wise Porphyry held in honor,
the master of all sciences, after the likeness of the godhead.
In all fields of knowledge the great Plato too shines out,
And likewise subtle Democritus and the glorious Socrates,
The astute Epicurus and Pythagoras the wise;
So too Hippocrates the great, and the wise Galen,
But exalted above these all is Aristotle,
Surpassing all in his knowledge, both predecessors and successors:
entire wisdom did he contain in his books and writings,
making philosophy a single body, perfect and complete.
What was written concerning the wise Salomon found its fulfillment in
him:
“none in any age was wise like he.”

DAWID BAR PAWLOS, ed. DOLABANI 1953, 21; tr. BROCK 1982, 25

A positive attitude towards Greek (pagan) culture was not unanimous among the Syrians; members of clerical and monastic circles sometimes expressed a rather hostile stance towards pagan philosophers.⁶² The invention of an authoritative “chain of transmission” would help to explain the employment of Greek philosophy in Christian education, thus giving a justification for the study of secular works.⁶³ The philhellenic but markedly anti-Byzantine stance that can be observed among Muslims authors as well has its roots in the positive attitude of Syriac learned circles toward Greek learning.⁶⁴

The self-understanding of Christians as the true successors of Greek thinkers involves a “Christianization” of Greek philosophy on vivid display in the *Book of Governors*, by the East Syrian Bishop Thomas of Marga from the ninth century CE. He presents Christian monks as the “true philosophers.” This approach

62 E.g., Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymni de Fide*, ed. Beck 1955, 2.24.

63 For this historiographical practice, see Becker 2006, 12–17.

64 See, e.g., the examples in al-Jāhīz, *al-Radd ‘alā l-naṣāra*, tr. Pellat 1969, 87; Gutas 1998, 83–95.

can simultaneously be observed in Byzantine literature: the term *philosophos* designates “monk” and eventually every “learned man” who is able to read and write.⁶⁵ Thomas of Marga presents Moses and Elijah as the first ascetics; then he mentions John the Baptist, Christ and his apostles, and finally the Christian monks. The bishop wonders whether pagan philosophers lived an ascetic and contemplative life or not, and concludes that the most distinguished philosophers acquired their unrivaled wisdom by means of a truly ascetic life. Homer is described as an ascetic alchemist living many years in the desert. It is because Plato lived in a cell in the desert and studied the Old Testament that he became the wisest of all philosophers and enjoyed such a high reputation in Athens. Pythagoras is quoted as saying that without physical asceticism and monastic silence, no philosophical knowledge can be acquired.⁶⁶

Thomas of Marga’s perception of monks as adherents of an “ascetic” philosophy can be traced back to the inception of Christianity. Already in the second century CE early pagan observers seem to have interpreted Christianity as a kind of Cynicism.⁶⁷ Galen describes Christians and Cynics in very similar terms, as people achieving a philosophic ascetic discipline without true philosophic basis.⁶⁸ A Christian missionary who kept faithfully to Jesus’ commands had to be aware that he would most likely be taken for some kind of Cynic. Clear traces of Cynic-sounding ideas are to be found in the writings of the Church fathers in Alexandria such as Clement of Alexandria (d. 215 CE) in his *Paidagogos* and Origen (d. c. 254 CE) in *Contra Celsum*. The latter accepts an aligning of Christians with Cynics and portrays Jesus in Cynic colors. He cites the Cynics with favor to justify the Christian practice of preaching in public and the life of voluntary poverty (*C. Cels.* 1.55; 2.50). On the other hand, Christian writers of the early centuries often criticize certain aspects of Cynicism, especially the shamelessness of its exponents.⁶⁹

The emergence of monasticism from the third century CE onwards will significantly contribute to a broader acceptance of Cynic ideas within the Christian communities. The practice of monks closely resembles that of many Cynics. Both groups, Cynics and monks, share common features: rejection of normative values of civilization, rejection of pagan gods, the ascetic life, the outer appearance and verbal articulation. The purpose of *askêsis* was, however, a different one—the ascetic life of the Cynics led to self-assertion and self-control, the *telos* of the monks was the vision of God

65 Dölger 1964.

66 Budge 1893, 529–33.

67 Downing 1993, 283.

68 Walzer 1949, 15.

69 Dorival 1993, 442–443.

and assimilation to God. This is the main difference, and we should interpret Cynicism and monasticism as two—sometimes rival—manifestations of ancient asceticism.⁷⁰ The resemblance of these forms of asceticism fostered the re-use of Cynic *chreiai*, maxims and examples in a monastic milieu, as we will show later.

One of the fathers of cenobitic monasticism in Eastern Christianity, Basil of Caesarea (d. 379 CE), paved the way for a broader acceptance of pagan philosophy (including Cynic ideas) in Christian circles. His *Letter to Young Men on How They Might Benefit from Pagan Literature*—also preserved in two Syriac translations of the fifth and seventh centuries CE⁷¹—had crucial consequences for the Christian intellectual history and shaped a Christian philosophy of education where pagan philosophers like Diogenes and Socrates exemplified a form of behavior that Basil felt desirable for Christian youths. He praises the ascetic values of Diogenes and Socrates, both characterized by the humble demeanor and disdain of worldly goods prerequisite for a life agreeable to God.⁷² With Basil, Diogenes and Socrates became firmly rooted in a Christian intellectual tradition, and possibly his *Letter* constitutes the beginning of the conflation of the personalities of Socrates and the Cynic Diogenes in the Syriac tradition.

5 The Portrayal of Socrates in Gnostic Collections

Collections of sayings, perhaps originally intended for schoolroom instruction, became during Hellenistic times an important source for information about philosophers and their doctrines.⁷³ Xenophon writes that Socrates discussed selected sayings of the ancients with his pupils (*Mem.* 1.6.14). Plato reports that wise saws were collected for instructional purposes, and teachers compiled anthologies of aphorisms for memorization (*Leg.* 7.811a). Stoics and Cynics in particular made constant use of gnostic collections in their teaching. In Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, composed probably during the third century CE,⁷⁴ apophthegms play an important role throughout the biographies of the philosophers. The oldest anthology to have been preserved to the greatest extent is of John Stobaeus from the fifth century CE. From the seventh century CE onwards, Christian gnomologia are composed along the

70 Goulet-Cazé 2016, 236; Downing 1993, 301.

71 Wilson 1975, 72–3.

72 Basil *Leg. lib. gent.* 9.3–4. English translation in Deferrari 1970, 415–17.

73 Barns 1950, Kindstrand 1986.

74 Mejer 1978, 3356–60.

lines of these models. The collection *Sacra Parallela* by John of Damascus (d. 754 CE), considered the oldest Christian collection, was succeeded by a large number of sacro-profane anthologies, whose exact date of compilation cannot be determined on the basis of current research.

The popularity of the gnomonic anthologies, particularly in Byzantine times, must be seen in connection with the intensified production of compendia and manuals on different topics that served as convenient reference works for particular fields of knowledge. This practice of collecting and reorganizing knowledge is typical for late antiquity and the Byzantine period: texts extracted from the plethora of writings bequeathed by Classical literature were collected and rearranged so that a new text corpus emerged.⁷⁵ Not always do these gnomonic anthologies contain only gnomai and apophthegms; writings pertaining to wisdom literature, biographical, and doxographical information can also be found such that collections often constitute a mixed form, not only in regard to their content but also in terms of their structure. One salient feature of these anthologies is the variability of the transmitted material in gnomonic literature. The collections could offer many variants not only in terms of the order of the sayings, but also in terms of their wording or their (more or less deliberate) attribution to particular authors, which could vary across recensions.⁷⁶ As a result, researchers of gnomologia are confronted with plethora of recensions and traditions of the gnomonic anthologies transmitted through a vast number of manuscripts. A synoptic and comparative work on the origin and transmission of the Greek collections of sayings has yet to be written, as the extensive and widely scattered sources of Greek gnomologia are difficult to handle.⁷⁷

Gnomai and maxims played a significant role in late antique education and became an important tool in philosophical, theological, and ethical teaching; they offer condensed instruction in these fields of knowledge that served the needs of meditation and memorization in monastic circles and were even used as school texts.⁷⁸ The popularity of such wisdom literature among the Syrians, particularly in monastic communities, is evident from the manuscript tradition of these gnomonic anthologies. Several Syriac manuscripts surviving from the seventh and eighth centuries CE (e.g., Mss. BL Add. 14658, Add. 14614, Add. 17193; Sinai Syr. 16) contain a number of collections

75 On restructuring of gnomonic material, see especially Gerlach 2003.

76 More in detail: Pietruschka 2014b.

77 Strohmaier 1998, 462; Kindstrand 1981, 99–106; for a review of the relevant editions, see Ihm 2001, iii–xvii.

78 Larsen 2016, on monastic education in Egypt; Papadogiannakis 2016 on education through gnomonic wisdom.

of sayings.⁷⁹ In these manuscripts, shorter gnomonic collections are arranged, containing sayings attributed to Menander, Pythagoras,⁸⁰ Plato,⁸¹ and a female Pythagorean philosopher, Theano.⁸² The so-called question-and-answer literature is related to gnomologia, an example of which can also be found in these early manuscripts.⁸³ Apart from these collections that are attributed to particular philosophers, fragments of thematically ordered gnomologia are also preserved in Syriac. Several manuscripts contain sayings entitled “On the soul,” attributed to several authorities, and possibly constituting remains of more comprehensive collections on this subject compiled around the seventh century that apparently gained some popularity at that time.⁸⁴

The gnomologia preserved in Syriac have to be seen in the context of popular ethics: the compilers often preferred sayings of pagan philosophers with an universal ethical and moral character that could be absorbed into a Christian context without problems (and vice versa)—a process that will be eventually repeated when pagan or Christian sayings and proverbs are assimilated into Muslim collections. The complexity of the transmission of gnomologia—not only in Syriac—makes it in most cases difficult, if not impossible, to reconstruct philosophical doctrines from this material. We can, however, draw valuable conclusions from the arrangement of sayings and their combination with other texts in miscellanies regarding the intended purpose and audience of the respective collection. This becomes clear when we compare the above mentioned miscellanies of the seventh century from the Dayr al-Suryān. Ms. BL Add. 14658 combines collections of sayings with several smaller works discussing the term “substance.”⁸⁵ Ms. Sinai Syr. 16 contains philosophical sayings on the soul, the discourse of a philosopher on the soul,⁸⁶ the advice of Theano, and philosophical discourses on asceticism and anger combined with ascetic literature; the lives of the Egyptian Desert Fathers constitute the core of this manuscript. These two examples clearly demonstrate that just varying the configuration and combination of sayings can influence the meaning and interpretation of the whole collection: while the former manuscript highlights the philosophical aspect of the gnomonic anthology and is to be seen as a sort

79 Bettio 2002, with an overview of manuscripts and collections preserved in Syriac.

80 Lagarde 1858, 195–201; Levi della Vida 1910; Wunsch 1968.

81 Brock 2012.

82 Possekel 1998.

83 Brock 2003, 14.

84 For an overview, see Zeegers-Vander Vorst 1978; Arzhanov 2013. See now the edition of these collections by Arzhanov 2019.

85 Cf. n. 30.

86 For the text: Smith Lewis 1894, 18–26; German translation: Ryssel 1896.

of encyclopedic work, the latter manuscript is apparently intended for a monastic audience; it depicts philosophers as ascetics whose maxims could be merged with the apophthegms of the Desert Fathers without any difficulty.⁸⁷ This combination points to a monastic background of compilation. Both manuscripts, however, were probably used for educational purposes.

In the Syriac gnomic collections, the Stoic and Cynic perception of the personality of Socrates is likewise apparent.⁸⁸ We already mentioned the representation of Socrates as wise instructor, in which disdain of worldly goods and power, acceptance of poverty, and disregard of suffering are the outstanding features. This is not far removed from the personality of Diogenes; it is therefore not surprising to find him conflated with the latter.⁸⁹ This characterization, already prevalent in Greek collections, for example in Diogenes Laertius and Stobaeus,⁹⁰ is pursued in the Syriac tradition, fostered in monastic circles that coupled the ascetic ideal with the personality of Socrates or Diogenes.

The mixing of both philosophers is best manifested by the attribution of the barrel as lodging for the former in the Arabic tradition: "If the barrel wherein you live were to be broken, what would you do?—Socrates replied: Even if the barrel were to be broken, the place in which it is would not be broken."⁹¹ In the Syriac tradition, the saying about Socrates in the barrel is preserved in the *Laughable Stories* (*Tunoye mḡaḥkone*) compiled by Bar Hebraeus.⁹² Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286 CE) was the most important representative of the so-called "Syriac Renaissance" of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries CE.⁹³ This author was well-versed in Arabic literature; sometimes he takes a Muslim-Arabic work as a model for his own writings, and incorporates material from both Arabic and Syriac sources. The same is true for his *Laughable Stories*, based largely on an Arabic *adab* compilation from the eleventh century CE,⁹⁴ though Bar Hebraeus obviously had access to other, non-Arabic, anthologies not yet

87 Pietruschka 2014b.

88 On the Cynic influence on the image of Socrates in Arabic, see already Rosenthal 1940, 388. See also Gutas 1975, 451–7, for an overview of the influence of Cynicism on gnomic literature.

89 Strohmaier 1974, 123–5; Alon 1991, 30–1; Overwien 2005, 403–8, with a comparison of the portrayal of Socrates and Diogenes.

90 Cf. Giannantoni 1990, 1 C (Dicta Socratis 99–139). On Stobaeus' Socrates in particular, see Prince (in this volume); on Diogenes Laertius, see Dorandi 2018.

91 Strohmaier 1974, 124.

92 Barhebraeus, *Laughable Stories*, ed. Budge 1897, 7.

93 Takahashi 2010, 42; Teule 2003.

94 Compiled by al-Ābī (d. 1030 CE), *Nathr al-durr*, see Marzolph 1985.

identified.⁹⁵ Thus a considerable number of Socratic sayings in his collection corresponds with sayings preserved in the Arabic tradition.

Bar Hebraeus falls back on the Greek-Arabic version⁹⁶ of the well-known conversation between Xanthippe and Socrates before his death, but puts it into a Christianized context: “He asked a woman, when he was taken out to be *crucified*, having seen her crying: ‘What makes you cry?’ to which she answered: ‘How can I refrain from crying when you are going to be killed unjustly?’ He said: ‘Would you rather that I should be killed justly?’”⁹⁷

Often sayings with a misogynous content (in the Greek tradition commonly ascribed to Diogenes) are attributed to Socrates. The saying that “Socrates saw a woman who had hanged herself on a tree, and he said: ‘Would that all trees bore such fruit as this!’” is one of these examples.⁹⁸ Another example is the following saying (in the *Laughable Stories* attributed to “another philosopher”): “He saw a woman in the theatre looking on as a spectator and said to her: ‘You have not come out to see, but to be seen.’”⁹⁹ In another anecdote, Socrates likens marriage to a fisherman’s net: those fish which are outside wish to get in and those inside wish to get out.¹⁰⁰ This negative attitude toward women documented in sayings of such a nature fits well with the ascetic, monkish image of Socrates provided in the gnomologia of both Christian and Muslim provenance.

It is striking that the Socratic sayings which Bar Hebraeus compiled in his collection are—in most cases—not to be found in the above-mentioned gnomologia of the sixth/seventh centuries CE. Most of the Socratic sayings in these early Syriac collections appear to have no corresponding Greek sayings attributed to Socrates, in contrast to those found in Arabic.

A closer look at the Greek and Arabic sayings ascribed to Socrates shows the growing prominent position this philosopher gained in the Arabic tradition. In the Greek tradition approximately 250 sayings by Socrates are preserved; the Arabic tradition attributed 720 sayings to him.¹⁰¹ Concerning the sayings by Diogenes, the proportion is inverse: 350 sayings in Greek are opposed to 220 sayings in the Arabic tradition.

95 Pietruschka 2012, 31.

96 DL 2.41.36. See also Alon 1991, 84.

97 DL 2.41.36. Budge 1897, 7, v.

98 Budge 1897, 7, iv. Cf. DL 6.52.

99 Budge 1897, 9, xvii. Cf. Aelian (Xanthippe), Alon 1991, 152 n. 472; other parallels: Overwien 2005, 281.

100 Budge 1897, 13, xli.

101 Alon 1991, ch. “Teachings.”

So, the Syriac gnomic collection “On the soul” in Ms. Sinai Syriac 16 mentions Socrates only twice, with sayings of an ascetic character.¹⁰² A reading of other early Syriac gnomologia confirms this observation. The short gnomologium in Ms. Vat. Sir. 135 (seventh/eighth century CE)¹⁰³ contains only two sayings of Socrates. One of them refers to a “quarrelsome woman” (undoubtedly an indication of Xanthippe) who poses a challenge for the virtue of patience.¹⁰⁴ In contrast to these collections, Socrates is more frequently represented in the anthology of Bar Hebraeus which reflects the numerical proportions of the Arabic—not the Syriac—tradition.

It is safe to conclude that the early Syriac collections which already circulated in the seventh and eighth centuries CE plausibly go back to older archetypes whose (Greek?) sources are still unidentified.¹⁰⁵ The ascetic and misogynous portrayal of Socrates in the Syriac gnomologia hints at a monastic background that certainly preferred sayings of such a content. The failure of the search for a Greek *Vorlage* for the early Syriac gnomologia could be explained, however, with the history of transmission of Greek collections. Many of the Greek collections that came down to us are to be seen in connection with the renaissance of literary interests of Byzantine intellectuals during the ninth to eleventh centuries CE.¹⁰⁶ This renaissance ran in parallel with the Greco-Arabic translation movement that lasted for more than two centuries up to the tenth century CE.¹⁰⁷ Syriac-speaking Christians played a prominent role in the translation movement that was spurred by an increased interest in Greek scholarship and philosophy among the Muslim elite. After the Muslim conquest in the seventh century CE, monasteries (e.g., on Mount Sinai, in Palestine, and also the above-mentioned Qenneshrin) became important intellectual centers: their libraries contained valuable collections of Greek and Syriac manuscripts that were of interest to a Muslim readership. Christian scholars and clerics had knowledge of various languages and had access to books in demand—they represented the ideal proponents of Greek thought to the Muslim Arabs. Important for our purposes is the fact that Syriac

102 Sachau 1870, 79; Ryssel 1896, no. 44, 45. Arzhanov 2013, 317–21.

103 Assemanus 1759, 213–16; Arzhanov 2014.

104 Edition and Russian translation in Arzhanov 2012, 256. German translation in Arzhanov 2014, 47.

105 Whether these collections were translated from Greek into Syriac, or were originally composed in Syriac, is still a matter of discussion. Even if many collections barely show parallels with the Greek tradition, it would be a mistake to conclude that Syriac gnomologia had played a negligible role in the transmission of Greek gnomologia to the Arab world (cf. Gutas 1994, 4949–50).

106 Richard 1962, 487; Odorico 1986, 9–10; Strohmaier 1998. See Ihm 2001, iii–xvii.

107 Gutas 1998, 20–22; Gutas 1994, 4951; Brock 2003, 14–16.

translators, who in the first generation often came from monastic circles,¹⁰⁸ were obviously well versed in Greek and Syriac gnomologia and were crucial for the level of popularity this genre attained among the Arabs. Thus in the ninth century CE, gnomologia came to be translated that evidently had not found their way into Syriac at an earlier point in time; the *Golden Verses* of Pythagoras are an example of that. Syriac remained an important intermediary stage for translations of gnomonic anthologies from Greek into Arabic,¹⁰⁹ of which some may have circulated later on. A good example is the occurrence of a cluster of sayings from the seventh century CE in an Arabic collection compiled by al-Mubashshir ibn Fātik in the eleventh century CE.¹¹⁰ Moreover, it is possible to assume that some sayings were transmitted from Greek into Syriac several times; otherwise the divergences in the wording of a saying cannot be explained.¹¹¹

6 Conclusion

The image of Socrates in Syriac culture has to be seen in the wider context of the late antique perception of this philosopher. The dominant philosophical schools in late antiquity, with their focus on ethics and moral instruction, are most responsible for shaping the portrayal of Socrates. Gnomonic collections of Stoic-Cynic provenance in particular provided the image of the wise instructor and ascetic sage who offers moral and ethical advice. Socrates as *paradeigma* became the most important form of the reception of this philosopher among the Syrians. The Church fathers paved the way for a wider acceptance of pagan philosophy—especially Cynic ideas—in Christian circles. The phenomenon of conflating the personalities of Socrates and Diogenes and their image as ascetics is already prevalent in Greek gnomologia and is pursued in the Syriac tradition that highlights the virtues and ascetic values of these philosophers. During Islamic times, monastic circles seem to play an important role in transmitting this portrayal which served now as *paradeigma* for both Christians and Muslims.

¹⁰⁸ Troupeau 1991; Griffith 1997; Griffith 2008, 48–53.

¹⁰⁹ For the methods, see Bergsträsser 1925; Brock 1991; Overwien 2012.

¹¹⁰ Arzhanov 2013. The failure of the search for a Greek *Vorlage* led in the past to the loss of scholarly interest in the Syriac collections, which explains the earliness of research on the Syriac gnomologia: Recently, Y. Arzhanov (2019) published an edition of the mentioned early Syriac gnomologia. Relevant material is collected in the database *Corpus der arabischen und syrischen Gnomologien* (<http://casg.orientphil.uni-halle.de>); cf. Pietruschka 2014a.

¹¹¹ Cf. Brock 2004a, 5–6.

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Socrates in the Arabic Tradition: An Esteemed Monotheist with Moist Blue Eyes

Elvira Wakelnig

Information on Socrates reached the Arabic-Islamic world mainly via two channels: the transmission of Greek gnomological material, and the transmission of Platonic dialogues, especially the *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*.¹ Familiar in their similarity to Arabic wisdom literature, Greek gnomologia were among the first texts rendered into Arabic, from as early as the eighth century onwards, and enjoyed a lasting popularity. The first Arabic gnomological collection of sayings and anecdotes, surviving only in a later recension, was compiled by the well-known translator Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (d. 873).² Under the title *Apophthegms of the Philosophers* (*Nawādir al-falāsifa*), it contains sayings attributed to Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Alexander, Diogenes, Pythagoras, Hippocrates, Galen, Ptolemy, Luqmān,³ Hermes, Homer, Euclid, and some other yet-to-be-identified sages. The composition of this compilation coincides with the early stages of the so-called translation movement during which the majority of ancient Greek philosophical and scientific works were translated into Arabic. Ḥunayn's motivation in composing his *Apophthegms of the Philosophers* may thus have been to provide background on the Greek sages whose works were about to be translated and assimilated into the Arabic-Islamic world and to depict them as morally good people whose scientific achievements should not be taken to conflict with Islamic values. Similar aims may be attributed to later Arabic collections of sayings ascribed to Greek philosophers, so that in these cases the information regarding Socrates

- 1 The most comprehensive survey of Socrates in Arabic so far has been provided by Alon in two separate volumes, of which the first (1991) contains an analysis of the Arabic material on Socrates, whereas the second (1995) presents 130 passages relating to Socrates' life and 805 passages on his teachings in the original Arabic with English translation. A summary is given in Alon 2006. For a bibliographical essay on Socrates in the Arabic tradition, see Wakelnig 2016. For Arabic gnomologia in general, see Gutas 2017, 662–70.
- 2 Ḥunayn's *Apophthegms of the Philosophers* has survived only in excerpts in al-Anṣārī's *Maxims of the Philosophers* (*Ādāb al-falāsifa*); see Zakeri 2004.
- 3 Luqmān is a sage mentioned in the Quran (31, 12–13) on whom God bestowed wisdom. He is often pictured as the ultimate source of Greek philosophy—as Empedocles' teacher—in Arabic histories of philosophy. See, e.g., Rowson 1988, 71.

was preserved less from a specific interest in his personage than from a general interest in the great Greek authorities of the past, among whom Socrates figured prominently. A more particular interest in Socrates may be behind the transmission of Plato's dialogues featuring Socrates.⁴ Bio-bibliographical Arabic sources attest that the first philosopher of the Arabs, al-Kindī (d. around 866), wrote now-lost treatises thought to have dealt with aspects of several Socratic dialogues,⁵ namely *What Transpired between Socrates and the Harrānians*⁶ (referring to the *Apology*); *The Story of Socrates' Death (Phaedo)*, *The Story of Socrates' Virtue (Crito)*, and *The Agreement of the Philosophers about the Allegories of Love (Symposium)*. Al-Kindī's acquaintance with these texts seems to have been mediated by certain pagan communities still extant at his time, notably in and around the city of Ḥarrān. These pagans are believed to have had an affinity to Socrates, because they read their Hermetic teachings into Socratic allegories. Further, their precarious situation among Christians and, later, Muslims led to sympathizing with the persecuted Socrates.⁷ Even if the influence of al-Kindī's lost writings is hard to establish, reports of Socrates' death stemming ultimately from the aforementioned Platonic dialogues are found in later Arabic gnomological collections in which the two transmission channels seem to merge. A good example of such compilations is Mubaššir's *Choicest Maxims and Best Sayings*, to which we shall now turn.

1 The Physical Appearance of the Arabic Socrates

The Arabic Socrates is

a white man, blond and blue-eyed, of good physique, but ugly face, narrow-chested, slow-moving, but fast in answering, of unkempt beard and not tall. When asked, he lowered his eyes a short moment and then answered convincingly. He was much of a solitary person, but not much of either an eater or a drinker. He was a fervent worshipper of God and reflected much about death. He journeyed a lot, excelled in exercising his body and was poorly dressed. He inspired awe, was good at logical reasoning and no flaw was found in him.⁸

MUBAŠŠIR, *Muḥtār al-Ḥikam*, 90–1

4 Suggested by Gutas 1988, 47; 2012, 850–1.

5 See Gutas 1988, 38–45; 2012, 850.

6 That is, the pagans; see Gutas 1988, 43.

7 Gutas 1988, 47.

8 All translations not otherwise cited are my own.

At least this is the Socrates with whom the historian and scholar Mubaššir ibn Fātik presents his readers. He does so in his only surviving treatise, an anthology of biographical information, anecdotes, and wise sayings of mainly Greek authorities, the *Choicest Maxims and Best Sayings* (*Muḥtār al-Ḥikam wa-maḥāsin al-kalim*), composed in 1048/9. Unfortunately, the Greek sources on which Mubaššir must have drawn in Arabic translation are, for the most part, still unestablished. What is easy to establish, by contrast, is the huge success with which his anthology was met in the Medieval Arabic-Islamic and European world. It was first translated as *Bocados d'oro* into Spanish, then into Latin, French, Provençal, and English. One English version, translated from the French by Earl Rivers and entitled *The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers*, was among the first books published in England by the first English printer William Caxton, in 1477.⁹

Mubaššir starts his chapter on Socrates saying:

the meaning of “Socrates” in Greek is “the adherent to justice.” He was the son of Sophroniscus, and his birth, youth, and death took place in Athens. He left three sons behind.

MUBAŠŠIR, *Muḥtār al-Ḥikam*, 82

The proposed etymology occurs in a number of Arabic sources, yet without any further indication of its origin. Other etymologies found are “the holder of health” and “the one adorned with wisdom.”¹⁰ The latter occurs in a little treatise entitled *Explanation of the Names of the Sages* (*Tafṣīr asmā' al-ḥukamā'*) and attributed to the philosopher al-Fārābī (d. 950). Therein fourteen fanciful etymologies without any apparent unified explanation system are presented for Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates, Galen, Hermes, Socrates, Asclepiades, Rufus, Porphyry, Alexander, Chyrasorios,¹¹ Asclepius, Glaucon, and Themistius.

In his chapter on Socrates Mubaššir then gives a number of biographical anecdotes. Socrates asked to marry a stupid and impudent woman in order to train himself in patience.¹² He adopted the habit of neither writing nor dictating, on the model of his master Timaeus: the latter trusted not in dead animals' skin to guard his teaching but only in living substances. When Socrates was obliged to accompany his king on a military campaign, he took

9 See Rosenthal 1993, 283. However, this edition “had almost no impact on later English writings” (Sutton 2006, providing [n. 43] only one exception referred to in Bühler 1948). Facsimile reproductions are to be found at 1877, x and [49].

10 Alon 1991, 41.

11 Rosenthal 1942, 74, remarks that “this Chrysaorios is the addressee of Porphyry’s *Eisagoge*.”

12 For other Greek and Arabic versions of this story, see Alon 1991, 53–4. As earliest Greek authors Alon cites Xenophon (*Symposium*, 2.10) and Isocrates (*To Demonius*, 21).

shelter against the cold in a large broken jar. One day he was sitting in front of the jar when the king passed and posed a number of questions, such as why Socrates never came to see him, whether he needed anything, and whether he said that idol worship was disadvantageous. The philosopher provided traditional answers, namely that he was kept from seeing the king because of his work; that he needed the king's men to stop blocking the sun; and that idol worship was of advantage to the king who controlled his subjects with its help, but of no matter to Socrates who believed in a Creator who provided for him and rewarded or punished him according to his deeds. This Socratic attitude towards idol worship is also presented as the reason for his condemnation in the *Choicest Maxims*:

When Socrates' contemporaries would ask him about idol worship, he would deter them from it, point out to them its invalidity, and forbid them to exercise it. He would, rather, instruct them to worship The One, Eternal Producer and Creator of the world with all there is in it, the Wise and Omnipotent, not the carved stone which neither speaks nor hears nor senses through any organ whatsoever. He would urge people to piety and doing good, and instruct them to do good and refrain from evil, [while being] on guard against his contemporaries. He did not intend that they attain perfect conduct, as he knew that they would not accept that from him.

When the chief priests and archons of his time learned about the objectives of his propaganda, namely, the denial of the idols and diverting people from worshipping them, they passed a death sentence upon him.

MUBAŠŠIR, *Muḥtār al-Ḥikam*, 85–6; tr. ALON 1995, 28

A detailed account of Socrates' incarceration, and references to the long wait for his execution and the discussions with his students in this last time of his life, are then described according to the information provided in the Platonic dialogues *Crito* and *Phaedo*. The number of the philosopher's students and students' students is given as twelve thousand by the time of his death. Mubaššir concludes the biographical section of his entry on Socrates with the above-cited physical description. The material provided must, at least for the most part, go back to Greek sources about Socrates, with some material transferred from other philosophers, such as Diogenes in his barrel.¹³ The same

13 For misattributions of gnomological sayings even in Greek and Latin sources, see Halkin 1944, 50–1; Strohmaier 1996, 45–6, 300–5. For the assumption that the Christian-Syriac milieu was responsible for making Socrates a Cynic, see Halkin 1944, 43–8; Strohmaier

holds true for the second and last part of Mubaššir's chapter on Socrates, a collection of maxims, edifying anecdotes, and ethical advice.

Mubaššir's chapter in its entirety exemplifies the sort of information on the Greek philosopher that reached the Arabic-Islamic world and that one may find in Arabic bio-bibliographies, such as Ibn al-Nadīm's *Index of Books (Fihrist)* and Ibn Ġulġul's *Generations of Physicians and Wise (Ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā' wa-l-ḥukamā')*, both from the end of the tenth century; Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a's *Sources of Information on the Generations of Physicians (Kitāb 'Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā')* and al-Qifṭī's *Information for the Learned about the Accounts of the Wise (Iḥbār al-'ulamā' bi-aḥbār al-ḥukamā')*, both from the thirteenth century; and in gnomologia, the already mentioned *Apophthegms of the Philosophers* by Ḥunayn and al-Kindī's *Sayings of Socrates (Alfāz Suqrāt)*, both from the ninth century, and three eleventh-century compilations: Miskawayh's *Eternal Wisdom (al-Ḥikma al-ḥālida)*, Ibn Hindū's *Spiritual Sayings from the Greek Maxims (al-Kalim al-rūḥanīya min ḥikam al-yūnānīya)*, and *The Cabinet of Wisdom (Šiwān al-ḥikma)* of which only two abridgements and the anonymous *Selection from the Sayings of the Four Great Philosophers (Muḥtār min kalām al-ḥukamā' al-arba'a al-akābir)* survive.

The popularity of Mubaššir's *Choicest Maxims* in general and his chapter on Socrates in particular is attested by one of his Socratic sayings being used as an inscription on the front wall of the mausoleum of a sister of Tīmūr Lang (Tamerlane), Šīrīn Bika Āghā (d. 1385), in the Šāh-i Zinda Necropolis in Samarkand (Figure 19.1).¹⁴ The inscription in white Arabic letters on blue Persian tiles prominently frames the entrance to the mausoleum and looks no different from the much more common Koranic inscriptions. It reads:

Socrates says: Man in this world is miserable no matter what the condition, he does not retain the means of subsistence provided for him. Precious little congratulations may be expressed for the pleasure he finds in it, constant is his agony in it due to the separation from his loved ones.¹⁵

MUBAŠŠIR, *Muḥtār al-Ḥikam*, 104

Among the Arabic bio-bibliographers and compilers of gnomologia mentioned two paragraphs above, only Mubaššir and a few authors quoting him provide a

1996, 297–8; Overwien 2003, 108–9. For the role played by the Syriac tradition in the transmission of the person of Socrates from Greek into Arabic, see Pietruschka (in this volume), and below, pp. 553–4 and p. 566, n. 47.

14 See Strohmaier 2003, 59–61.

15 According to Strohmaier 2003, 59 n. 3. The inscription seems to have been changed after "Precious little ..." during the latest renovation work.



FIGURE 19.1 Entrance facade, Šīrīn Bika Āghā Mausoleum, Šāh-i Zinda Necropolis, Samarkand, Uzbekistan

PHOTO BY B. O'KANE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO (WITH PERMISSION)

detailed description of Socrates' appearance.¹⁶ However, Socrates' appearance also figures in the Arabic physiognomic literature translated from the Greek. There is, first, Polemon's *Physiognomy* (*Kitāb al-Firāsa*), lost in Greek and translated into Arabic before the end of the tenth century. Within the context of the discussion of the eye, which is for Polemon of highest indicative value, the following passage occurs:

If you see a moist eye that is between hollow and goggling, gleaming, and clear, praise it, for you will find its owner intelligent, understanding, loving knowledge and sexual intercourse. It was mentioned to me that of this description was the eye of Socrates the Philosopher, about whom Apollo said: "The knowledge of Socrates transcended the knowledge of mankind, and they killed him as a people envious of him on account of his great knowledge that they saw."

POLEMON, *Kitāb al-Firāsa*, 364, tr. HOYLAND 2007, 365

Although Socrates entered the Arabic-Islamic world as having the ideal eye, he, as such, soon fell into oblivion again. For the reworked, Islamicized version of Polemon drops all but two references to Greek names, and thus eliminates the mention of Socrates.¹⁷ A similar fate was suffered by the Socrates of the following anecdote, in which his appearance is assessed by a physiognomist:

A man who claimed to be an expert in physiognomy was shown a picture of Socrates, and said, "This is a man who is mastered by depraved desire." The people laughed at him, saying, "This is Socrates, the most temperate of men!" But Socrates said to them, "One moment! The man did not lie. By nature, I am as he said, but I control myself and conquer my desire."

Muḥtār min Kalām al-ḥukamā', 110, tr. GUTAS 1975, 111

It is interesting to see that the two physiognomic passages on Socrates are linked by a reference to lust, expressed either as "loving sexual intercourse" or as "depraved desire." The story about the physiognomist assessing a picture of Socrates is widespread in Greek and Latin literature, and finally found its way

16 Mubaššir's portrait of Socrates also appears in Ibn Abi Uṣaybi'a's *Sources of Information on the Generations of Physicians* and al-Šahrazūri's *Promenade of the Souls and the Garden of Delights on the History of the Sages* (*Nuzhat al-arwāḥ wa-rawḍat al-afrāḥ fī ta'riḥ al-ḥukamā' wa-l-falāsifa*).

17 See Ghersetti 2007b, 318. Since Ghersetti 2007c edits only the introduction of the Islamicized version, I cannot provide more information on or a citation of the revised passage.

into the Islamic world.¹⁸ Although it is spread throughout Arabic literature, the present form preserved in the *Selection from the Sayings of the Four Great Philosophers* seems to be the only one preserving the original main characters, Socrates and a physiognomist. The above-mentioned bio-bibliographers Ibn Ġulġul and al-Qiftī, as well as the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum Secretorum* (*Sirr al-Asrār*), replace Socrates with Hippocrates¹⁹ and identify the physiognomist with Polemon.²⁰ However, Ibn Abī Usaybi'a first cites the anecdote in Ibn Ġulġul's version and then adds that the same account is also told about Socrates.²¹ Thus some trace of the original version must have survived until at least the thirteenth century, Ibn Abī Usaybi'a's lifetime.

The portrayal of Socrates in Arabic gnomologia and similar compilations presents a perplexing mix of genuine information, material transposed from other Greek philosophers to Socrates and fiction. The interest in him was not primarily a personal, but rather a generic one: Socrates was perceived as one representative of the ancient sages whose moral and ethical views did not radically deviate from the values of Islam. Remarkable is the limited concern with Socrates' outer appearance, as attested by the absence of any physical description in most of the Arabic works mentioned and the disappearance of his name in the physiognomic literature. By contrast with this general lack of interest, Mubaššir's attention paid to physical details is striking. He provides a description of the physique of a number of Greek sages and one wonders what triggered this particular interest of his and what his source might have been. As Ḥunayn's *Apotheegms of the Philosophers* are lost in their entirety, it

18 The story ultimately comes from the lost dialogue *Zopyrus* by Phaedo of Elis. All Greek and Latin evidence for the story is listed in Rossetti 1980.

19 This is easily explained by the similar *rasms* of Socrates (سقراط) and Hippocrates (بقراط) in Arabic script.

20 These occurrences are discussed by Ghersetti 2007a, 282–5. In the introduction of the reworked Islamicized version of Polemon's *Physiognomy* (see Ghersetti 2007c, 468–75) a more elaborate and slightly changed version appears. Hippocrates there uses the incident to warn Polemon against judging people based on their appearances alone. For, as he explains, natural desire may be controlled by intellect. The fact, that the Greek physician is called 'Master of wisdom' and 'Lord of the Philosophers' in this version is a good indication that its ultimate source also had the philosopher Socrates as Polemon's interlocutor. Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (1149–1210) rewrites the anecdote in his *Physiognomy* (*Kitāb al-Firāsa*) as an encounter between a king and Polemon. The physiognomist gives the same unfavorable assessment of the king's portrait. The latter, however, accepts it with good grace because its discrepancy from the king's apparent behavior shows the effort he has made for his own moral amelioration (see Mourad 1939, Arabic text p. 28 and French tr. p. 92).

21 See Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a in the entry on Hippocrates in his *Kitāb 'Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aʿlabbā'*, I 28.1–2.

is impossible to establish or exclude them as a source. Whereas the loss of Ḥunayn's compilation is certainly deplorable, the loss of al-Kindī's Socratic writings appears to be even more unfortunate, as they are thought to have demonstrated a precise and particular interest in the person of Socrates. They may have been the source of the attention paid to Socrates by philosophers such as Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. around 930), al-Fārābī (d. 950) and Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna; d. 1037), and by the physician al-Ruḥāwī (fl. 9th cen.).²²

Let us now turn to a text that provides some indications as to its sources and goes a step further in depicting some Greek philosophers as virtuous by making them adhere to typical Islamic tenets.

2 Socrates' Position on the Oneness of God, Divine Names and the Afterlife

Whereas the material on Socrates presented so far appears in Arabic literature without any precise information about how it got there, things are different with regard to a treatise entitled *Most Precious Words of the Philosophers Professing the Oneness of God and of the Authorities of the Past* (*Nawādir min Kalām al-Falāsifa al-Muwaḥḥidīn wa-l-a'lām al-māḍiyīn*).²³ These *Most Precious Words* not only show us a Socrates professing the most central tenet of Islam, namely God's oneness, but also point toward the origin of this portrayal. Socrates is presented among the ancient Greeks and Alexandrians who acknowledged God and His oneness, but information about whom is said to be difficult to come by in the Arabic world. Yet according to the anonymous compiler of the *Most Precious Words*, some books of these Greek philosophers were preserved in Syriac translation and it is from these translations that the compiler takes his material and renders it into Arabic. His reference to these translations as "old Syriac books" implies that the Greek-Syriac translations long preceded the Arabic interest in this material. Unfortunately, we cannot know what the Greek models looked like and to what extent the Syriac books available to our compiler changed their Greek sources. However, a certain literary genre comes to mind when confronted with ancient Greek philosophers professing monotheistic doctrines, namely Early Christian collections of sayings in which

²² On whom, see below, pp. 560–1.

²³ The treatise is so far known to survive in a single manuscript, Tehran, Kitābhāna-i Markazī-i Dāniṣṡāh 2103. The manuscript, dated to the thirteenth-fourteenth century, contains a collection of philosophical sayings. The first fifteen pages form a separate entity, namely the treatise of the *Most Precious Words* and have been discussed, edited, and translated in Wakelnig 2015, 223–45.

citations hinting at Christian teachings such as the Trinity or the Incarnation are attributed to pagan authorities. Examples of such collections survive from the fourth and fifth centuries in Greek and from the sixth and seventh centuries in Syriac.²⁴ Such Syriac collections may well have been the sources of the compiler of the *Most Precious Words*.

As this anonymous compilation is unique in its presentation of Socrates' position on not only God's oneness, but also on several other Islamic tenets, it is worth considering the aim and date of its composition as well as the *Sitz im Leben*. Some tentative hypotheses can be suggested based on the contents of the treatise. The first half of the text aims to show that God cannot be known or described in His essence, but only through His actions. The second half covers six topics, namely God's oneness, His divine names, the instruction to do good, the afterlife, law-making, and the acceptance of prophets. As all specifically Christian themes, such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the symbol of Cross, are conspicuously absent, and the subjects treated have particular importance in Islam, it seems reasonable to suggest that the brother in God²⁵ to whom our anonymous compiler addressed his treatise was a Muslim. As argued above, Muslim interest in the personalities of the ancient philosophers increased in the ninth and tenth centuries when a huge number of philosophical and scientific Greek texts were translated into Arabic. The Arabic-speaking readership of these translations wanted to know who was behind these texts, which were sought, first and foremost, for their scholarly achievements. Depicting the authors of these texts as having adhered to central Islamic tenets must have contributed to raising the acceptance of this foreign knowledge among the Muslims. For doing so the compiler of the *Most Precious Words* may have used material stemming from the above-mentioned Greek and Syriac literary genre, which had already clothed the ancient Greek philosophers in Christian and thus monotheistic garb. This material lent itself to the composition of an apology of these philosophers. And it allows us to learn about Socrates' positions towards some Islamic doctrines, either through sayings explicitly attributed to him or through more general summaries of the positions of the ancient Greek philosophers, which are applicable to him as well. It is worth noting that Socrates, whom even Greek sources picture as believing in a good Creator-God, was particularly suitable to such an adaptation.²⁶

24 See Brock 1983, 203–5.

25 This appellation need not imply that the addressor and addressee shared a creed.

26 For Socrates' arguments from design and the resulting belief in a good Creator-God, see Sedley 2007, 78–92.

The compiler of the *Most Precious Words* makes a clear distinction between the indications of God's oneness presented by the individual philosophers, claiming that

each one of the philosophers favors describing an indication which has appeared in his own mind.... Socrates says: if the beginning were two, time and place would necessarily belong to these two, because the distinction would already have made clear their two defining limits.

Nawādir min Kalām, 242, tr. WAKELNIG 2015, 243

Socrates' indication of God's oneness is particularly dense with a number of implicit assumptions. A reformulation of his argument may run as follows: If one assumes that there are two gods, they must have the same essence as god and are thus not distinguishable from one another in their essence. Entities that share a common essence can, by contrast, be distinguished by their different spatial and temporal positions. The assumed two gods are, however, by definition eternal and incorporeal, thus have neither time nor place and are consequently not distinguishable by time or place. If the two gods are not distinguishable in any way, they must be one and the same. So there is only one God.

The divine name by which Socrates refers to this one God is "the Cause of causes." In this way he wants to express, as our compiler explains, that

He is the First Cause for all universals and particulars and that there are intermediaries between Him and them. Already Plato has shown this meaning by his saying: if the cause of the generation of the son is the father, God is more deserving to be said to be the cause of the generation than the father due to the power which He has planted in the nature of the father—that is, the power of procreation. Thus he has been clear that God is the First Cause of the son by the intermediary of the father. Likewise God, to Whom belong majesty and might, is the First Cause for the generation of every being. The philosophers say that what is in the elevated worlds is without intermediary and what is in the lower world is through intermediaries.

Nawādir min Kalām, 242, tr. WAKELNIG 2015, 243

Socrates, and in particular Plato, are here credited with the Neoplatonic distinction of remote and proximate causes that became particularly influential in Arabic philosophy. The idea that God creates via intermediaries is most prominently expressed in the concept of the creation *mediante*

intelligentia that first appears in the Arabic Plotinus and Proclus.²⁷ There also the appellation “Cause of causes” is used.²⁸ The teachings of Socrates presented in the *Most Precious Words* thus have a distinct Neoplatonic tint. This is also noticeable in the following passage in which Socrates demonstrates the impossibility of knowing what God is by showing that the four Aristotelian types of inquiry into a thing (whether, what, how, why) are not applicable to Him. This argument is pronouncedly Neoplatonic and can be traced back to Plotinus:²⁹

All of the religious scholars and philosophers who have recognized God, to Whom belong majesty and might, agree that no cognition of the Creator, Whose mention is absolute, is possible by what He is. Already Socrates has displayed the logical argument for that. Thus he says: the cognition of the Creator, to Whom belong majesty and supreme exaltedness, by what He is is not possible, because quiddity is one of the four definitions by which one examines the created things, and they are: if the thing is, what it is, how it is, and due to what other thing it is. Thus in the examination it is first stated whether the thing exists or not. If it exists, the senses will attest to it. It is stated what it is, so its quiddity is described and it is the substance which is observed of it. Then it is stated how it is, so at that point its quality is described, that is the factual conditions which are observed of it. Then it is stated on account of which thing it is, so its creation process is stated because it generates the utmost of the created thing's condition and its completion which are described and applied to it. It is not possible that the senses perceive the Creator, to Whom belong majesty and supreme exaltedness, and that the intellects and minds encompass Him.

Nawādir min Kalām, 236–8, tr. WAKELNIG 2015, 237–9

Socrates argues that all four inquiries are answered through observation and sense perception, whereas God can be neither observed nor perceived by the senses. Since the only accurate way to determine what a thing is through the application of these types of inquiry, God's whatness cannot be known.

27 See D'Ancona 1995, 73–95.

28 For the Arabic Plotinus, see, e.g., the *Theology of Aristotle* (*Uṭlūḡiyyā Aristṭāʾālīs*) in Badawī 1977a, 4, 156–7 (in the context of creating the intelligible things without and the sensible things with intermediation, i.e., *tawassuṭ*) and 161 (twice); for the Arabic Proclus, cf. the *Book of the Exposition of the Pure Good* (*Kitāb al-Īdāh fi l-Ḥayr al-mahd*) in Badawī 1977b, ch. 17, p. 19.

29 See Rudolph 1989, 120–1.

The so-called *Doxography of Pseudo-Ammonius* (composed around 900), which is heavily indebted to the Neoplatonic tradition and shares a number of common features with the *Most Precious Words*, ascribes the argument that the four types of inquiry cannot be apply to God to Thales.³⁰

The compiler of the *Most Precious Words* does not describe any particular Socratic position concerning the instruction to do good and the setting up of laws. Yet he presents the approach common to the ancient Greek philosophers, and thus implicitly also to Socrates, and describes it as in accordance with intellect:

They have ordered the people to obtain virtues and to avoid vices out of preference for what agrees with and manifests intellect and refutes and abolishes ignorance. They also agree that the animal soul engenders the bodily desires. When it makes use of those desires, it strengthens the beastly character like anger, injustice, violence, aggressiveness, love of domination, and revenge and weakens the rational soul which engenders the approved character out of preference for justice, truth, forgiveness, and kindness. For this reason they have ordered them to do good deeds occurring due to the actions of the rational soul and ward off the desires engendered due to the animal soul.... Their intellects were pure and their character perfect. Each one of them would study wisdom from him who had preceded him, become devoted to his knowledge and bring forth, due to him, thinking and the excellent faculty to present the wisdom, rules and laws he set up for the common people.

Nawādir min Kalām, 242, tr. WAKELNIG 2015, 243

In contrast to the four already presented topics, the compiler of the *Most Precious Words* encounters some difficulties when discussing the Greek philosophers' positions regarding the afterlife and prophets. His effort to provide favorable interpretations of their positions is, however, remarkable. With regard to the afterlife, he mentions that Plato and Socrates did, at least, believe in the soul's recompense for its deeds, which perfectly agrees with the Greek tradition:

As for the reason they have neglected the belief in the afterlife, reward, or punishment, the resurrection of the bodies has been held by absolutely none of them nor has it appeared in their intellects.... Some of them have pointed to the recompense of the soul for what it had done. Thus Plato

³⁰ Rudolph 1989, 34.

says in pointing to the matter of the afterlife that the high worlds look at what is below them, because some of them produce effects on others. When they come to the moment of the second creation, the low looks at the high, thus the souls reach their ends, exist due to their essence, settle in their worlds and look at the light of their Creator.... Socrates says: the Originator and Director of the universe hears and sees the universe, He protects the good and destroys the bad. Everything is under His reign and His hold and he who does not seek to approach unto God by doing good, he perishes. I have not preserved anything else on this topic by anyone other than these two men. If in their opinion there had been any truth to the afterlife, they would have spoken about it like they have spoken about the other things.

Nawādir min Kalām, 244, tr. WAKELNIG 2015, 245

This passage provides an interesting insight into the working method of the compiler of the *Most Precious Words*. It seems that he wanted to cover his six topics—probably he considered them what his addressee would have wanted to know of the Greek philosophers—but could find little relevant material for Greek views on the afterlife. Instead of inventing sayings, he must have looked through his Syriac sources and chosen the material that seemed most pertinent. Here he selected a passage about the upper and the lower worlds attributed to Plato which, while lacking much resemblance to the Islamic concept of the afterlife, at least implied a concept or term which our compiler could render by the term “second creation” or “raising.” This recalls similar Koranic terms such as the “first creation” (56, 62) and the “final” (29, 20) or “other creation” (53, 47)—that is, resurrection. The term “second creation” also occurs in the *Doxography of Pseudo-Ammonius*, where it is attributed to Thales (XIII, 14 and 21), Heraclitus (XX, 13), and Empedocles (XXIII, 1)³¹ and, because of its ascription to Socrates even more interestingly for our discussion, in the *Book on the Afterlife* (*Kitāb al-Amad ‘alā l-abad*) by the philosopher al-‘Āmirī (d. 992). The passage in which it appears in al-‘Āmirī is sufficiently similar to the Heraclitus passage in the *Doxography* to suggest a common source and reads as follows:

Socrates said that at the Second Raising (*al-naš’a al-ṭaniya*) the heaven will become starless. For the reason for the stars’ being fixed in it is the

31 The passage only states that Anaxagoras, Democritus, Plato, Aristotle, Proclus as well as two unidentified philosophers and all who came after them believed in the second creation following Empedocles’ teaching.

rapid motion of the spheres which carry them along. But everything in motion comes to some rest; and whenever the spheres cease their revolution, their stars will fall off and come to surround the earth, being all contiguous with one another, like a flaming circle. Every soul which has been defiled and wicked will remain on this earth surrounded by flame. But for the pure souls the heaven will become like the earth, and their heaven will be a luminous heaven, nobler than this one. And There there will be pure beauty and pure pleasure.³²

AL-ʿĀMIRĪ, *Book on the Afterlife* IV, 9, tr. ROWSON 1988, 83

Rowson has suggested some Platonic passages, most convincingly *Phaedo* 69c and *Theaetetus* 153d, as the ultimate source of this account.³³ Rudolph has drawn attention to a very similar account attributed to Plato in al-Maqdisī's *Book of the Beginning and History* (*Kitāb al-Bad' wa-l-ta'rīḥ*) composed around 966 at the Samanid court.³⁴ This sits well with the ascription of the belief in the second creation to Plato in the *Most Precious Words*, even if the second creation as such is there described differently and includes a number of worlds. Might this indicate the existence of some either late antique Greek or Syriac tradition according to which Plato believed in the second creation during which all the upper worlds would become light, whereas the sublunary world would become encircled by fire, keeping the evil, damned souls within, while the good, pure souls would ascend to the light above? The interest of such a tradition to Christians who wanted to show the proximity of their faith to Ancient philosophy suggests itself. The same must have held true for Muslims and can thus explain the occurrence of accounts of the second

32 Ed. and tr. Rowson 1988, 82–3. After this passage, al-ʿĀmirī continues quoting teachings attributed to Socrates, namely that a man of pure wisdom also possesses pure good and is in no need of intermediaries between the Lord and himself. This is followed by an account implying the Neoplatonic hierarchy of being, i.e., bodies, nature, soul and intellect.

33 Rowson 1988, 246–9.

34 Rudolph 1989, 194. On al-Maqdisī, see Bosworth et al. 1993, 762.

The passage in al-Maqdisī (*Kitāb al-Bad' wa l-ta'rīḥ* 11, 237) reads:

"In the book *Sūfistīqā* [*Sophistics*] Plato relates an account of the souls and their conditions after the separation from the bodies. He says that the evil soul when withdrawn from body remains wandering and bewildered in the world until the time of the other creation. He says that at this time the planets fall down from their spheres and one is connected to the other so that they become like a circle of fire around the earth. Those souls are prevented from ascending to their place and the earth becomes a prison for them."

There is no satisfying explanation for al-Maqdisī's reference to a *Sophistics* by Plato. He may have confused the title of the Aristotelian work with Plato's dialogue *The Sophist*, *Sūfistīs* in Arabic, yet its subject matter is not related to the question of souls and their afterlife.

creation in several Arabic texts of similar intention. The attribution to varying Greek philosophers is harder to explain, yet the change from Plato to Socrates is not particularly surprising, given that the two are often credited with one and the same position³⁵ and Plato often appears as Socrates' mouthpiece.³⁶

Coming back to the compiler of the *Most Precious Words* and his working method, we may observe that when addressing the afterlife the compiler not only presents a quotation on the second creation attributed to Plato, but also quotes some passages on the question of recompense, which is intrinsically related to questions concerning the afterlife. Socrates is pictured as promoting the approach unto God by doing good in order not to perish after one's death. In closing the topic the compiler rephrases his introductory remarks, stating that if the Greek philosophers had believed in the afterlife they would have talked about it. This insistence clearly indicates that he understands afterlife in a very limited and precise, namely Islamic sense, for there certainly are Greek philosophical works alluding to existence after death. It further indicates that he did not have access to the following *Phaedo*-source attested in the *Ethical Conduct of the Physician (Adab al-ṭabīb)* by Ishāq ibn 'Alī al-Ruhāwī (fl. 9th cen.):

As for Plato, he speaks about the soul in the book related to *Phaedo (Fādūn)* concerned with the soul. He describes in great detail the rewards, punishments, and judgment in the hereafter, as well as the classes of rewards and punishment after death.... Socrates says that the soul is immortal and incorruptible after the separation from the body.... He says that when everyone dies, his angel to whom he was particularly entrusted while alive, wishes to lead him to one of the therein mentioned places so that the people gathered in it may receive according to what is for and what is against them. Then an angelic guide entrusted with the passage from here to there guides them to the hereafter. There they receive in accordance to what they deserve. They remain in this place for the period of time which they must remain there.... Then Plato mentions in that book the description of the flourishing regions bringing forth different sorts of good-smelling, good-looking, and well-built trees and of places full of turbid rivers containing stinking matter and in rough conditions, which drop down to the bottom of the earth. He explains that it is called

35 As, for example, in the Arabic translation of Aetius' *Opinions of the Philosophers*.

36 As, for example, in the remains of Plato's Socratic dialogues in Arabic.

hellfire. He mentions that the evil in it are tortured, whereas the good abide forever in the other one. This is from Plato's famous books.³⁷

AL-RUHĀWĪ, *Adab al-ṭabīb*, 14–15

The passage reads like a rather faithful version of the *Phaedo* 107c–108c already slightly adapted to Islam.³⁸ Unfortunately we have almost no information about al-Ruhāwī, let alone his sources. There is, however, the interesting fact that he once lists al-Kindī among the modern philosophers (*Adab al-ṭabīb*, 19). This not only places him at approximately al-Kindī's lifetime, in the ninth century, but also suggests that al-Ruhāwī may have had some sort of acquaintance with the latter, maybe even access to some of the Greek-Arabic translations made for the philosopher. As it is highly probably that al-Kindī's *The Story of Socrates' Death* mentioned in the Arabic bio-bibliographical literature dealt with the *Phaedo*, he must have had some version of the Platonic text, which would, in turn, be a likely candidate for being al-Ruhāwī's source. In any case, the Socratic citation from the *Ethical Conduct of the Physician* stems from a different, probably Arabic source, not available to the compiler of the *Most Precious Words*.

With regard to the acceptance of prophets, our compiler chooses a different strategy than he has adopted in the case of the afterlife and opts for a straightforward apology for the Greek philosophers, not relying on anything they might have uttered:

As for their refusal to accept the prophets, upon them be peace, there appeared no prophet who made his message be heard in Greek, and no one performed a divine miracle among them. The crowd would reject the reports of that which was not possible according to the intellects, and no miracle appeared among them, so that the evidence would have compelled them to accept it by having observed and seen it with their own eyes. Therefore they refused to accept the prophets, upon them be peace, and their books.

Nawādir min Kalām, 244, tr. WAKELNIG 2015, 245

Whereas the compiler of the *Most Precious Words* stresses that no prophet has been sent to the Greeks speaking to them in their language and performing

37 I do not cite Levey's translation (1967, 21), as it is highly paraphrastic. The Arabic text is also available online in an edition by J.C. Bürgel (1992, 8–9), <https://www.graeco-arabic-studies.org/single-text/text/buergel-10/page/8.html>.

38 On al-Ruhāwī's *Phaedo* citations, see Bürgel 1971; on existing Arabic *Phaedo*-sources, see Rowson 1988, 29–39.

miracles and thus implies that they were not even confronted with the question, other Arabic authors take a different stance. The above-mentioned al-Maḳḍisī, for example, claims in his *Book of the Beginning and History*:

Among the Ancients, Plato, Socrates and Aristotle asserted the belief in prophecy. These men said: Prophecy is knowledge and action.

AL-MAḲḌISĪ, *Kitāb al-Bad' wa l-ta'rīḥ* III, 8

In the same vein, Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) quotes a Platonic saying allegedly taken from an Arabic version entitled *Book of the Laws*, which is not known to be extant today. According to it, Plato even talked about divine “messengers”—a term which is, in the Islamic tradition, much more exclusive than the term “prophets.” Thus Plato must have accepted the existence of messengers and prophets. The quotation occurs in Ibn Sīnā's *Proof of Prophecy and Explanation of their Symbols and Similes* and reads:

Now we begin to explain the allusions about which you have asked me. It is said that it is made conditional for the prophet that his discourse consists of allusions and his expressions of signs. Likewise Plato mentions in the *Book of the Laws* that he who does not inquire about the meaning of the symbols of God's messengers (*rusul*), will not obtain the divine realm. Likewise the great philosophers and prophets (*anbiyā'*) of the Greeks employed allusions and hints, in which they inserted their secrets, in their books, such as Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato.³⁹

IBN SĪNĀ, *Tis' Rasā'il*, 124–5

Ibn Sīnā's counting of Socrates, Plato, and Pythagoras among the philosophers and prophets of the Greeks may be explained by his “purely intellectualist approach ... to the phenomenon of prophecy” according to which “at the highest point they [i.e., Prophet, Mystic, and Philosopher] are all one at the intellectual level.”⁴⁰

A similar “intellectualist” understanding of prophecy is explicitly ascribed to Socrates himself in the alchemical tradition which also reports that the Greek philosopher believed in metempsychosis and was considered a prophet by his contemporaries:

39 For a translation of the entire treatise, see Marmura 1963.

40 On al-Fārābī's and Ibn Sīnā's philosophical concept of prophecy, see Rahman 2008, 30–45. For the quoted phrases, see pp. 35 and 92.

Even if Socrates belonged to those who believed in the transmigration of souls, he still professed the beauty of God's oneness. For the people of his time he was a prophet like Hermes and Agathodaemon were for them. For, for them, a prophet was only someone who had been around in the entire world, knew all teachings, and spoke every language....

Neither this man Socrates nor his followers said that prophecy was a revelation from the Creator, to Whom belong might and majesty, but it happened through an emanation of intellect caused by Him, Whose majesty is absolute, over him in whom there are these signs. For him revelation was that which occurred to him and was imagined and nothing else.⁴¹

ĞĀBIR IBN ḤAYYĀN, *Kitāb al-Naqd*, 156–7

The author of this passage is the famous Arabic alchemist Ġābir ibn Ḥayyān; his alleged writings are attested from the tenth century onwards. The remarks on Socrates appear in the *Book on Critical Examination* (*Kitāb al-Naqd*) in the context of a discussion of treasures: who buries them, and for what reason. People of Socrates' kind are said to bury treasures for their brothers living at a later time and to facilitate their finding them by the composition of so-called treasure books (*kutub al-maṭālib*). As with the Socrates of the *Most Precious Words*, Ġābir's Socrates professes God's oneness⁴² but, interestingly, also believes in metempsychosis. Ġābir further mentions that Socrates was killed because he had removed idols and images. The presented understandings of prophecy, that is, the one of the Greeks in general and the other of Socrates in particular, lack any element of divine intervention. Socrates' understanding even recalls the theory of Muslim philosophers such as al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā who explained prophecy through contact with the Active Intellect. The esteem with which Socrates is depicted in this passage is characteristic of Ġābir's attitude towards the Greek philosopher in general. He considers him the father and master of all philosophers and calls the highest level of alchemical learning "Socratic knowledge" (*al-ʿilm al-Suqrātī*).⁴³

41 The cited passage is added at the end of al-Idrīsī's (d. 1251) *Book of the Lights of the Upper Bodies on the Unveiling of the Secrets of the Pyramids* (*Kitāb Anwār ʿulwīy al-ağrām fī l-kašf ʿan asrār al-ahrām*) in one manuscript introduced by the words: "From the *Book of the Critical Examination of the Art*, authored by Ġābir ibn Ḥayyān al-Šūfī, excerpting the discussion of treasures." Haarmann 1991, 13–18, discusses it and translates it into German.

42 For a further passage by Ġābir in which Socrates is said to have prompted others to believe in God's oneness, see Kraus 1942, 52 n. 7.

43 Kraus 1942, 52. Unfortunately there has been no further research on the topic since Kraus's seminal work, although this is definitely an important desideratum.

Coming back to the *Most Precious Words*, we may conclude that the Socrates presented there believes in God's oneness, uses the divine name of "the Cause of causes," and is convinced that only virtuous people persist after death. Like most of the ancient Greek philosophers, he trusts his intellect to define what is good, instructs and commands his contemporaries to do that good, and was not granted any prophetic revelation. The fact that Socrates is just one among several Greek philosophers portrayed as having believed in the God's oneness suggests that the compiler's aim was a more general rehabilitation of Greek philosophy and its protagonists than of Socrates in particular. The various positions, such as the Second Raising, being indifferently ascribed to one or another ancient philosopher in similar texts, such as the *Doxography of Pseudo-Ammonius* or the doxographical section of al-ʿĀmirī's *Book on the Afterlife*, point in the same direction. It is noteworthy that while the gnomologia discussed above present the Greek philosophers as morally good people, the *Most Precious Words* aim at setting their views as close to Islam as possible. The evidence that Socrates had a different, a more individual and personalised role in the alchemical tradition is apparent, but awaits further research.

Individual attention to the personage of Socrates also finds expression in various writings attributed to the Greek philosopher in the Arabic tradition.

3 Writings Attributed to Socrates in the Arabic Tradition

Although the Arabic bio-bibliographers are well aware of Socrates' refusal to write books and even cite anecdotes to that avail, some still ascribe treatises to him. The most complete list is the one by Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, which comprises the following titles: a *Treatise on Politics* (*Maqāla fī al-siyāsa*), a *Letter on Proper Conduct* (*Risāla fī al-sīra al-ḡamīla*), a *Letter to his Brothers on the Comparison between Law and Philosophy* (*Risāla ilā iḥwānīhī fī al-muqāyasa bayn al-sunna wa-l-falsafa*) and a *Book on the Reprimand of the Soul* (*Kitāb Mu'ātabat al-naḥs*).⁴⁴ Of these four alleged writings, the *Comparison between Law and Philosophy* is extant. In this very short text, Socrates mainly addresses three topics, on which he says the following:

Law is good but philosophy is better than it. This is because law forces us to abandon crime, but philosophy teaches us.... Let your concern be with your soul, but with respect to the body only what necessity requires. Now as for those matters which are external to the soul and the body, do

⁴⁴ Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *Kitāb 'Uyūn al-anbā'* I, 49.

not be concerned with them at all.... And accustom yourselves to being in need of few things, for whenever you banish need from yourselves you are nearer to God, because God is not in need. And whenever you are much in need, you are farther from Him.

Risāla al-muqāyasa, 274–5, tr. BERMAN and ALON 1980, 269–70

Socrates' concerns are thus the primacy of philosophy over the law, the soul's priority over the body, and the approach toward God.

The idea that philosophy teaches what the law simply commands or forbids recalls the *Most Precious Words*, where intellect is said to incite us to do good and to cause the setting up of laws accordingly. The philosophers adhere directly to the findings of intellect, but set up laws for the common people. In the same vein Socrates here seems to imply that if one is trained in philosophy, one does not have to have recourse to the law, because philosophy teaches one the essence of the law. This recalls al-Fārābī's political philosophy and it is interesting to see that exactly this connection has been made by the tenth-century Arabic scholar al-Mas'ūdī. In his *Book of Admonition and Revision* (*Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa-l-Iṣrāf*), al-Mas'ūdī implicitly presents Socrates as the one who turned from natural to political philosophy and makes him the head of a school which extended to al-Fārābī. Al-Mas'ūdī's presentation of Socrates' philosophy consists, as Stern has already shown, of excerpts from the detailed table of contents which al-Fārābī had put at the beginning of his book *On the Principles of the Opinions of the Inhabitants of the Excellent City* (*Mabādī' ārā' ahl al-madina al-fāḍila*).⁴⁵

The primacy of philosophy expressed in our Pseudo-Socratic treatise is even in line with the criticism which the theologian and scholar al-Ġazzālī (1058–1111) directs at Socrates and other Greek philosophers in his *Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-falāsifa*), namely that due to their strict adherence to intellect they reject all revelations and consider them human fabrications. He explains that

concurrent with the sobriety of their intellect and the abundance of their merit is their denial of revealed laws and religious confessions and their

45 See al-Mas'ūdī, *Kitāb al-Tanbīh*, 115–22. For an English translation of Mas'ūdī's entire passage, see Stern 1960. The turn from natural to political philosophy is described using an inaccurate Aristotelian citation as follows: "Aristotle mentions this in his book *On Animals* (which consists of nineteen books) in the following words: 'Since a hundred years ago, since the time of Socrates, people turned from natural to political philosophy.'" (tr. Stern 1960, 33) and is discussed by Stern in n. 33.

rejection of the details of religious and sectarian [teaching], believing them to be man-made laws and embellished tricks.⁴⁶

AL-ĞAZZĀLĪ, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, 2, tr. MAMURA 2000, 2

The way in which Socrates presents the soul's priority over the body and the approach unto God in his *Comparison between Law and Philosophy* resembles the contents of another Pseudo-Socratic writing, an alleged letter to Plato the wise (*Kitāb Suqrātīs ilā al-ḥakīm Flāṭūn*). The framework of the letter, which may be inspired by Plato's *Republic* 603e–604c, is Plato's having lost his son and unduly grieving him, for which he is reproached by Socrates:⁴⁷

By God, Plato! You are anguished and mourning because souls are not detained in the abode of shadows and slavery. But, [in fact], your mourning and anxiety [turn out to be] over the transfer of your beloved [son] to life and honor, because of your vigorous turning back on [the right] view and [your] introducing a contradiction between theory and practice....

Sorrow can not be done away with. [Rather] employ yourself in overpowering desire. If you succeed in doing so, you will not meet any obstacle on the road to the abode of the living, where you will find your son Amrābḥfūn (?). He enjoys [the qualities] of ample intelligence, overcoming of desires, and protection of [his] soul to such a degree that the only course open to him was that which leads to the abode of the living.

Kitāb Suqrātīs, 54 and 59–60, tr. ALON 1995, 49 and 53

In this background story, Socrates clearly adheres to and promotes the belief that life after death is desirable, not deplorable, as the soul is finally separated from the body. Knowledge and its salvific role for the soul take center stage in the *Letter*, yet Socrates is also concerned with refuting false beliefs about the soul, such as the ones held by physicians and astrologers. About the former he says:

46 See also Alon 1995, p. 20 (Arabic) and p. 26, passage (100).

47 For an edition and translation of this letter (*kitāb*), see Alon 1995, 53–60 (Arabic) and pp. 48–53, passage (171). The Platonic reference to the discussion between Socrates and Glaucon in the *Republic* has been suggested by S. Pines (in a personal communication referred to by Alon) along with the assumption that “this treatise represents a Syrian-Christian piece that was translated into Arabic”; see Alon 1995, 114–15.

When their intellects failed in this (i.e., psychology), they charged them [exclusively] with medical [investigations], through which they hoped for instant results, rather than through psychology. They joined the soul, about which they were ignorant, to the body, about which they had [some] knowledge, and attached the one to the other, out of fear lest their knowledge about the soul be found wanting, and that of others richer than theirs about the soul. [All these stands they take], in spite of what they wrote in the introduction to their textbook where they mentioned God and His superiority over anything else. In it they used terms to praise Him that were exclusive to Him and to the soul, and wrote words that are incompatible with their ascription of the soul to the body. Except for this school, no other philosophers or teachers of wisdom have mixed those definitions nor have they related them to one another.

Know that I have not said what I said out of provocation.... I feared that [if] the views of Hippocrates and Galen, as well as other authorities on medicine who have little interest in anything else, gained the upper hand, the number of those who are weaker students, who take pleasure in philosophy but cannot refute falsehood, would increase.

Kitāb Suqrātīs, 57–8, tr. ALON 1995, 51–2

The Socrates of the *Letter* probably refers to medical writings such as Galen's *The Faculties of the Soul Follow the Mixtures of the Body*. He fears that these may mislead students of philosophy to adopt a false belief about the relationship between body and soul, especially as these writings pretend to hold God and the soul in high esteem. As for the astrologers, Socrates in particular takes issue with their assumptions that the heavenly bodies influence the events in the sublunary sphere through their motions and that astrological predictions based on the stellar constellation at the time of one's birth are possible. For Socrates affirms that God is the sole originator of everything.⁴⁸

It is hard to judge whether these Socratic criticisms of the physicians and the astrologers may, like the framework of a discussion about grieving, also have a Greek model or, at least, source of inspiration. Difficult to imagine, yet not entirely impossible is that someone writing in Greek would have made Socrates complain about Galen who lived more than half a millennium later. The criticisms also fit well with the intellectual climate of the ninth and tenth centuries of the Abbasid Empire, in which the above-mentioned translation movement was at its peak. The ideas and concepts transmitted in the translated scientific and philosophical works were discussed, adapted, and

48 See Alon 1995, 52–3.

further developed. Among them beliefs like those criticized by our Socrates were common. Be that as it may, it is highly interesting that Socrates was deemed to be an appropriate mouthpiece to voice this sort of criticism, either in late antiquity or in the Arabic world. This could indicate a strategy similar to the one applied in the Early Christian collections of sayings discussed above. Socrates, as a philosopher and scholar himself, may have seemed particularly suitable to address fellow scholars and convince them about the necessity to refute certain scientific positions.

The Arabic pseudo-Socratic writings as well as the personage of the Arabic Socrates in general certainly deserve further research.⁴⁹

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49 This chapter was written with the financial support of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) by granting the project "Gathering Knowledge" (V 384–G15).

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Socrates, “Princeps Stoicorum,” in Albert the Great’s Middle Ages

Nadia Bray

1 Introduction

In Limbo, Dante meets, among the most important philosophers from antiquity, Socrates (*Inf.* IV 131–132), who is, as he says in the *Convivio*, a teacher of virtue like Zeno and Seneca (III XIV 8). But in *Purgatorio* (III 43), Vergil ignores Socrates completely, despite his having been denied God’s vision just as much as the two similarly-too-early philosophers he does mention, Plato and Aristotle. This equivocal attitude toward Socrates is unsurprising; Dante says little about Socrates’ doctrine: he ascribes to him the idea, drawn from Albert the Great, that the soul comes from stars (*Conv.* II XIII 5), and erroneously also the Aristotelian idea that virtues consist in the golden mean (*Conv.* IV VI 13). Dante’s understanding of Socrates is just an example among those of other medieval intellectuals.¹

From the fifth century CE on, the name of Socrates was well known to medieval authors: it was used as a proper name in grammatical examples. Until the tenth century, nevertheless, knowledge of Socrates and his doctrine was very minimal. Key references are found in Marius Victorinus and Macrobius, who mention him as founder of dialectic and as the philosopher who, completely detached from any worldly pleasure,² recognizes no good other than virtue and honesty.³ Freculf of Lisieux calls him the philosopher of the active or practical life, counterpoised to Pythagoras, the philosopher of the contemplative life.⁴ According to Isidore of Seville, he is the teacher of good habits.⁵

Starting in the eleventh century, however, mentions of Socrates and his purported doctrines become frequent and numerous. Intellectuals like Abelard,

1 See Delaye 1900, 283–4; Laarmann 1995, col. 2027–8.

2 See Macr. *Sat.* 2.8, 16, 160, 8; *Sat.* 7.4.32, 423, 12; see also Christ. *Stabul. Lib. gen.* 19, 366, 448–9; Hrab. Maur. *In Matth.* 6, 518, 17–18.

3 See Mar. Victor. *Rhet* 1.2, 18, 125.

4 See Frechulf. *Hist.* 1.4, 14, 231, 37–40.

5 See Isid. *Etym.* 11.24, 5, 6–12.

William of Conches, and John of Salisbury, by their direct reading of the *Timaeus*, made available through the Calcidian translation and commentary, treat Socrates as the author of the doctrine of natural and positive justice.⁶ Because of their interest in classical literature, they have at hand the most important sources of information about Socrates available in Latin literature before the introduction of the translations of Aristotle's works—Cicero, Seneca, and Aulus Gellius.⁷

On the basis of the doctrines sourced ultimately to Cicero, and later assimilated into Patristic literature, the Medieval intellectuals created a positive and evocative profile of Socrates:

- teacher of Plato Abelard *Theologia Christiana* 2.32 (145,446); *Theologia Scholarium* 1.108 (360,1175); William of Conches *Glossae super Boethium* 1.3 (71,92); Hugh of Saint Victor *Didascalicon de studio legendi* 3 (52,14–19).

Cicero *Orator* 3.15.59

Tertullian *De anima* 46.9 (852,48–49); Augustine *Contra Academicos* 3.17.37 (57, 6–11); *De civitate Dei* 8.2 (218,47–48); *ibid.* 2.4 (219,1–17)

- doubts Abelard *TC* 2.31 (144,426–145,437); John of Salisbury
- everything *Policraticus* 5.17 (359,1)

Cicero *Academica priora sive Lucullus*. 1.17,2.74; *De natura deorum* 1.11.

Lactantius *Divinae institutiones*. 3.28.17 (266,16–19); *De ira Dei* 1.6 (68,14–18); 11.13 (97,10–14); Augustine *C. Acad.* 2.2.6 (26,13–19);

Jerome *Commentarii in Ezechielem* 13.42 (609,128–130); *Adversus Iovinianum* 2.14 (304b); *Apologia adversus libros Rufini* 1.17 (15,12–13); *Epistolae* 53.9 (469,9–10); 57.12 (525,17–526,3).

6 See Abael. *TC* 11.37, 147, 523–6; *ibid.* 11.46, 150, 647–51; *TS* 1. 109, 361, 1189–97; Guill. Conch. *Sup. Plat.* 1.12–31, 23, 6–60, 44; 1.47, 84, 7–13; 1.159, 288, 22–7; Ioh. Sarisb. *Policr.* VIII. 8, 274, 22.

7 For Cicero, see McConnell (in this volume); for Gellius, Holford-Strevens (in this volume).

- model of perfect wisdom and virtue

Abelard *TS* 1.107 (360,1173); Aelred *Homiliae de orationibus prophetis Isaiae* 29.11 (267,115); John of Salisbury *Policr.* 4.6 (111), 7.15 (154,12), 8.11 (295,21), 12 (316,5).

Cicero *Or.* 1 (231,22).
 Tertullian *Ad nationes* 1.4 (15,10); Lactantius *Inst.* 3.20.1 (245,3–5); *Epitome divinarum institutionum* 32.1 (707,20–22); 32.3 (707, 24–708,3); 35 5 (711,189–23); *Ira* 1.8 (69.3–5); Minucius Felix *Octavius*, 13.1 (18).
- inspires many philosophical schools

Abelard *TS* 2.33 (145,461–465); 2.74 (164,1072–1076); Aelred *Hom.* 23.14 (208,136); William of Conches *In Boeth.* 1 pros. 3 (71,97–9); John of Salisbury *Policr.* 7.5 (105,20); 8.8 (118,4).

Cicero *Or.* 1.42; 3.62; *Ac.* 1.3; *De finibus bonorum et malorum.* 2.1; *Nat. D.* 1.93; 2.167.
 Lactantius *Ira* 9.3 (83,3–6); 10.49 (94,1–3); Jerome *Epist.* 49.13 (369,3–8); 52.8 (429,12–430,5); Augustine, *Civ.* 8.3 (219,31–5).
- supporter of the doctrine of the soul's immortality

Abelard *TC* 2.26 (143,374–379); Peter the Chanter *Summa quae dicitur Verbum abbreviatum* 1.8 (39,18).

Cicero *Or.* 3.59; *Tusculanae disputationes* 1.71.
 Lactantius *Inst.* 7.2.10 (587,14–18)
- moralist and inventor of ethics

Abelard. *TC* 2.32 (145,444–61); *ibid.* 2.65 (158,911–15); *ibid.* 2.74 (164,1053–8); *TS* 1.108 (360,1174–7); *Theologia 'Summi boni'* 1.66 (111,699–701); John of Salisbury *Metalogicon* 2.2, (58,26–7); *Policr.* 6.28 (83,22); 7.5 (105,12); 7.24 (214,1–3); 8 4 (241,19); 8.9 (282,11); 8.10 (284,18); Hugh of Saint Victor *Didasc.* 3 (50,3).

Cicero *Tusc.* 5.10; *id.*, *Ac.* 1.15.
 Lactantius *Inst.* 3.13.6 (213,5–8); *ibid.*, 3.21.1 (248,6–9); 6.17.4 (542,3–6); Augustine *Civ.* 8.3 (218,1–4).

- philosopher of the active life John of Salisbury *Policr.* 7.5 (107,22).

Cicero *Off.* 3.77; Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 12.9.6; Seneca *De beneficiis* 5.6.6.
Augustine *Civ.* 8.3 (219,35–39), 8.4 (220,22–24).

- detached from the worldly goods Abelard *TC* 2.68 (161,965–970); 2.70 (162,997–999); 3.33 (389–394); Aelred *Sermo* 21.8 (166,60); John of Salisbury *Policr.* 6.28 (84,30–85,15); 7.5 (106,18); 7.8 (178,27); 7.13 (151,8); 8.8 (276,20).

Cicero *De inventione* 1.90; *Tusc.* 5.91; Gellius *NA* 19.2.7. Quintilian *Institutio oratoria* 8.4.23 (453,27–454,2).

- capable of tolerating everything with tranquility Abelard *TC* 2.65 (158,904–6); 2.74 (164,1058–60); John of Salisbury *Policr.* 3.14 (222,53); Peter the Chanter, *Verb. abbrev.* 80 (425,233–236).

e.g., Cicero *De officiis* 1.90; *Tusc.* 3.31; Seneca *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium* 104.28.
Jerome *Homiliae* 42.1 (480,64–6); Quintilian *Inst. or.* 4.4.5 (230,4–9); Tertullian *Apologeticum* 46.10 (161,48–50).

- prophet John of Salisbury *Policr.* 2.16 (101,69–79).
This positive image of Socrates endures into the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Conradus de Mure (1210–1281) mentions him as teacher of Plato, knew that Socrates was born at the time of Xerxes, and tells of his drinking the hemlock without hesitation. Salimbene de Adam and Peter Joan Olivi cite his warning to question all things.⁸ According to Robert Grosseteste, Socrates is the philosopher who remains the same “in fortune and in adversity” (*in prosperis et adversis*).⁹ For Thomas of York, following his direct knowledge of Cicero’s *Tusculan Disputations*, Socrates is the philosopher detached from worldly goods, capable of tolerating death.¹⁰ Following Augustine’s information,

8 See Salimb. *Cron.*, 402.23; Ioh. Oliv. *In Eccl.* pars 3, c. 8, 183, 297.

9 Robert. Gross. *An. Post.* 2.4, 376–8.

10 See Thom. Ebor. *Sap.* 1 c. 1 (Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Conv. Soppr. A. vi. 437 = F, f. 1va. I wish to thank Fiorella Retucci for making accessible to me the transcription of the whole *Sapientiale*, which has not yet been edited): *Unde non cupiet vitam homo maxime, cum adquisierit humanam perfectionem, tunc enim percipiet in aliqua hora, quod melior est ei mors quam vita, sicut fecit Socrates Athenis et vilem habebat pecuniam;*

which Thomas traces back to the doctrine of the *Timaeus*, Socrates is also the philosopher who maintains that the first and highest causes can be found in God's will.¹¹

But in the same centuries we begin to see a second and rather more negative portrait of Socrates. In the writings of Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Eckhart, Jon Hus, and Bartholomew of Lucca, Socrates' doctrine comes to be associated with that of the Stoics, contrasted with Aristotle's, whose corpus is now completely available in Latin translations, and deemed erroneous in point of morality and psychology. His ethical intellectualism corresponds to a sort of idolatry of human reason which finds his most faithful legacy in the (reviled) Stoic philosophy.¹² Thomas Aquinas, for example, ascribes to Socrates two doctrines—the complete identity between virtue and science, and the infallibility of the wise person's reason—which he also ascribes to the Stoics, and criticizes from the perspective of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* 6.¹³ Eckhart ascribes to Socrates the second of these doctrines—again linking it to the Stoics, and criticizing it with Aristotle (this time from *Topics* 4)¹⁴—as well as the doctrine of a cosmopolitan ethics.¹⁵ Ptolomaeus of Lucca ascribes to Socrates, explicitly mentioned as the first Stoic, the erroneous doctrine of the imperturbability of the wise man.¹⁶ John Hus too links Socrates closely to the Stoics, believing him to be Zeno's disciple.¹⁷

The origin of this grave judgment of Socrates, widespread in the Latin culture of the late Middle Age, is due to Albert the Great (c. 1200–1280), the first great Latin commentator on Aristotle. No contemporary author attempts to archive

ibid. I c. 40, F, f. 45ra: *Secundo quod secundum sermonem Socratis non tantum dolor sed etiam mors patienter tolleranda est, quia aut sensum omnem aufert, et sic similis somno quietem adfert, aut morte migratur in loca sublimiora, hoc beatius est, prout dicit Tullius De Tusculanis questionibus lib. I ... ideo "non cuiquam bono mali quicquam venire potest sive mortuo sive vivo", sicut dicit idem Socrates, prout recitat Tullius in eodem.*

11 See Thom. Ebor. *Sap.* I c. 27, F, f. 34ra: *Nam, sicut vult Plato in Timeo I et II, ideo sunt res ideate, idest res facte, quia idea eorum est in Dei sapientia et propter hoc nominantur nomine cause et dicuntur cause secundum Platonem et Socratem, prout vult sapiens Augustinus De civitate Dei VIII cap. 2: "Cause quidam summe et prime, quas in unius veri Dei voluntate esse credebant Socrates".*

12 Concerning the medieval reception of Stoic philosophy, see Bray 2018.

13 For the doctrine of the identity between virtue and science, see Thom. Aquin. III d. 23 q. 1 a. 4 qc 2 ad 4, 714; *Sent. Ethic.* 6 l. 11, 376,3–9 and *S. th.* q. 58 a. 4 ad 3. For the doctrine of the infallibility of the reason of the wise man, see Thom. Aquin. *Sup. Sent.* II d. 24 a 3, 623; *De Mal.*, q. 3 a. 9 co., 86,165–74. Thomas ascribes the doctrine of the identity between science and virtue to Socrates and also to the Stoics in *De Mal.* q. 8, a. 3 ad. 18, 205,346–55.

14 See Eckh. *In Exod.* n. 33, 39,4–9.

15 See Eckh. *In Ioh.* n. 33, 178,6–9.

16 See Ptolom. de Lucc. *Reg. princ.* 4.4, p. 330,2.

17 See Ioh. Hus *Quodl.* 33, 171,27.

knowledge about Socrates so systematically and accurately as Albert does, or study the sources so well, or so clearly distinguish the relevant philosophical traditions.¹⁸ In Albert's texts Socrates is a teacher of a philosophy wholly alternative to Aristotle's but consistent with that of the Stoics—of whom he was, as Albert frequently repeats, “the first” (*princeps*). I will argue here two points. First, in most cases the doctrines ascribed by Albert to Socrates can be traced back to theories held by the Stoics. Second, Albert's Socrates is, above all, the philosopher who teaches the identity between virtue and science: virtue and science are neither acquired nor learned but recollected, since both derive from the natural perfection of human reason. Precisely as a supporter of the idea of the perfection of human reason, traced back to the Platonic *Meno* and identified as one of the most characteristic doctrines of Stoic philosophy, Socrates is, according to Albert, the first Stoic. I will support my second point through an examination of three texts: Albert's first commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, his commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*, and his second commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. I will also ask how Albert could access Plato's *Meno*, which is explicitly quoted in these last two texts.

2 Socratic-Stoic Doctrines in Albert's Works

Socrates' name appears most in Albert's commentaries on Aristotle, but also in the theological works, especially in the *Summa theologica*, and in some commentaries on the *Books of Baruch* and *John*—together, a total of 307 times. In 206 cases “Socrates” is just a name used in logical and grammatical examples. In the remaining 101 cases, however, the name of Socrates is associated, as we will see, with specific doctrines.

Virtually all the doctrines explicitly attributed by Albert to Socrates are ones he attributes to the Stoics.¹⁹ In particular, in the commentary on the Aristotelian *Physics*, Albert says that Socrates maintains that the different

18 De Libera 1997, 352–5; Anzulewicz 1999, 187, 193–6; 2006, xxix–xxxiv; and 2013, 595–601; Bray 2018, 91–122.

19 The only exceptions are the following: (1) Socrates, as the philosopher who in the *Politics* of Aristotle teaches that *omnia debere esse in commune*, which is the same Socrates about whom we can read in the pages of the Aristotelian *Ethics*, which Albert interprets; (2) Socrates, who in *De spiritu et respiratione*, according to the doctrine, documented in *De Platone et eius dogmate* of Apuleius, which was explicitly mentioned by Albert, knows the location of the *spiriti* in the human body; (3) Socrates, who in the *Mineralia*, explains the art of spells/charms; (4) Socrates, who in the comment on the *Topica, sicut legitur in primo Zenonis*, is the author of the definition of man, as rational animal, *amicis benefaciens et inimicis malefaciens*.

forms of matter together with their movement depend on spiritual substances, “givers of forms” (*datores formarum*), which have been named “intelligences” (*intelligentiae*) by some authors, “Gods” (*dii*) by some others (*Phys.* 8.1.11, 570, 5–16; *De caus. et proc. univers.* 2.5.24, 191, 24–192, 11). The doctrine, also ascribed to Plato and Speusippus by Albert on the basis of the Aristotelian *Physics*, was explicitly ascribed to the Stoics in Calcidius’ commentary on the Platonic *Timeaus*.²⁰ In the *De somno et vigilia* (3.1.1, 178a) Socrates predicts the arrival of his disciple, Plato, a view Albert must have gotten from Apuleius’ *De dogmate Platonis*.²¹ In the same work Socrates also recognizes the prophetic science as a divine science (*Somn. Vigil.* 3.1.8, 187b); as was said in the *Timaeus*, the human soul comes from the stars (*comparibus stellis*), and it is of the same nature as the celestial intelligences;²² the soul communicates with the daemons, God’s messengers, thanks to the rational nature common to both. The Socratic doctrine of prophecy has again been likened to the Stoics’ view of divination, which Albert knows from Cicero’s *De natura deorum*. In his commentary on Aristotle’s *Topics*, following Plato’s *Meno*, Socrates upholds the doctrine of reminiscence (*Topica* 4.2.2, 372a). The same doctrine appears again in the commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*, together with its immediate inference, the idea that virtue can neither be acquired nor learned and comes only as a gift of God (*An. post.* 1.1.5, 16b). The reference to the *Meno* is explicit, as it is again elsewhere.²³ The idea that human reason is the true origin of all virtues together with the doctrine of reminiscence, on which it is based, characterize Stoic philosophy, as Albert argues on several occasions.²⁴

3 The First Reference to the Stoics as Socrates’ Followers in Albert’s *Super ethica*

To explain Albert’s interpretation of Socrates as a Stoic, we should start by looking at the first time Albert explicitly draws attention to the relationship between Socrates and the Stoics, in his first commentary to a work of

20 See Arist. *Phys.* 252b28; Pl. *Ti.* 48e–50c, tr. Chalc. 46,12–15; 48,8–12.

21 See Apul. *De dogm. Plat.* 1.1, 88,3–10.

22 See Pl. *Ti.* 41c–42d, tr. Chalc. 36,8–sqq; see also Alb. *Somn. Vigil.* 1.2.6, 147b; 2.1.2, 160b; 3.1.6, 184b; 3.1.10, 193a; 3.1.12, 195b.

23 See Alb. *An. Pr.* 2.6.8, 780a; 2.7.6, 798a; 2.7.8, 803a; *Praed.* 5.12, 267b; 7.7, 286a; *Eth.* 1.1.2, 3a; 2.6, 27a; 7.5, 114a; 6.4.5, 461b; *Pol.* 3.10, 307b; 7.5, 624b; 7.5, 665a; 7.11, 710b; *S. th.* 1.17.68, 4, 711a; 2.12.72; 4, 1, 32, 41b; 2.12.72.4, 3, 50b; 2.15.92.1, 194a; 2.16.98.1, 226b; 2.16.102.3, 259b; 2.16.103.2, 263b; 18.116.2, 3, 353b; *De anima* 1.2.14, 55,79–80; *Caus. et proc.*, 2.2.26, 120,54–8.

24 See, e.g., Alb. *Caus. et proc.* 3.2.10, 190,87–191,2.

Aristotle's: the *Super ethica* (1249).²⁵ In *Nicomachean Ethics* 1, after having clarified that the highest good for a man consists in nothing but happiness, Aristotle asks about the correct definition of happiness. He presents three possibilities (which Albert reads in the translation of Robert Grosseteste): either happiness and the highest good derive from virtue (*virtus*), or from wisdom (*prudentia*), or from knowledge (*sapientia*) (1098b24–27).²⁶ Albert glosses this three-fold distinction. According to the first, happiness consists in acting virtuously, generically; the second requires living in accordance with a practical good, which only wisdom (*prudentia*) can properly identify; the third consists in the search for knowledge and in the contemplative life (*Super ethica* 1.9.46). Aristotle considers it important to point out that some of the listed opinions have been upheld by many and time-honored men (*multi et veteres*), others by a few famous ones (*pauci et gloriosi viri*)—nobody was completely mistaken, even though nobody satisfactorily solves the problem (1098b27–30). Albert refers to such “few and famous men” as men who must have been “wise” and “glorious during their life”: specifically, Stoic philosophers and Socrates’ disciples (*Super ethica* 1.9.46, 47, 7–10).

We cannot readily here understand Albert’s reasons for designating the Stoics as among Socrates’ disciples. But this passage will appear significant for Albert’s distinction between the Aristotelian and Peripatetic philosophy, on the one hand, and Socrates and the Stoics on the other. Albert claims, following the Ciceronian *Paradoxa*, that the Stoics are the philosophers who have identified the virtues with the highest good (*Super ethica* 1.4, 21, 10–17), and that their ideal of a politically active life is counterpoised to the contemplative one of the Peripatetics (2.1, 89, 3–6.15–19). Even Socrates supports a non-Aristotelian doctrine: he identifies the virtues and sciences as “wisdoms” (*prudentiae*) (2.4, 110, 60–61; cf. Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1144b17–30).

4 Plato’s *Meno* as Manifesto of the Stoic Philosophy in Albert’s *Posterior Analytics*

The second context, in which Socrates and the Stoics are mentioned together, appears in Albert’s commentary on the logical works of Aristotle, and it once again concerns, oddly enough, the Socratic doctrine of virtue. In the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle tries to establish a theory of science. Providing scientific demonstrations, Aristotle explains, means formulating valid syllogisms with true premises. Aristotle deals in particular with the interpretation of a kind

25 For the translations of the works of Aristotle’s used by Albert, see Kübele 1968–72, xii–xiv.

26 For the dating of Albert’s works, see Kübele 1968–72, v–vi.

of foreknowledge that must be presupposed in the premise of a scientific syllogism (*An. post.* 1.1 71a1–9).²⁷ The positions of the Stoics and the Peripatetics regarding this foreknowledge Albert describes again as radical alternatives. For the Peripatetics, the conclusion of a scientific syllogism is foreknown in its corresponding premise only potentially—that is, according to the logical principles through which the conclusion will be drawn; for Socrates, Plato, and *multi de secta Stoicorum*, by contrast, the conclusion of a syllogism is instead actually foreknown—its truth is perfectly contained, albeit hidden, in the scientific premise itself (*An. post.* 1.5, 15–16). Unlike the Peripatetics, for whom knowledge involves acquiring new intelligible forms through study and doctrines, for Socrates, Plato, and the Stoics knowledge involves reminiscence, the discovery of intelligible forms already present within man's reason.

The idea of knowledge as reminiscence, Albert explains in his comment, has its source in the works of Plato and, in particular, in the *Meno*: Aristotle himself states this in the passage of the *Posterior Analytics* just mentioned (71a29–30). At the time of his commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*, Albert had access to a source that allowed him to examine the *Meno* doctrine in depth but not the dialogue directly—he reveals that he believes it to be a letter addressed by Plato to Meno, whom he presumed to be a disciple of Plato and Socrates (*An. Post.* 1.5, 16). The question in the *Meno* which Socrates and Plato need to answer concerns the origin of virtues, and in particular, whether the virtues are a good acquirable or learnable or received only as the divine gift which the soul achieves when it turns in on itself (*assuescibiles vel discibile vel a diis datum per conversionem animae ad se ipsam*). They choose the third solution. This means that knowledge is nothing but memory or reminiscence. According to Albert, even Boethius, Augustine, and Gregory of Nyssa share this doctrine with *multi de secta Stoicorum* (1.1.5, 16).

With his analytical strength and his interest in the origins of the ancient philosophical doctrines, Albert studies the theory of the *Meno*, identifies at least five arguments which support it, and compares them all to Stoic philosophy. He traces all of them back to just one fundamental presupposition. (1) Knowledge, like any other physical mutation, implies that the intelligible forms pre-exist in the soul (*omnes formas per motum accipiendas iam intus esse in quolibet accipiente eas*), according to the doctrine of Anaxagoras (1.1.5, 18); (2) the cognitive process implies the soul's recognition of forms that are

27 Arist. *An. Post.* 1.1 71a19, tr. Iacob., 5, 310: *Omnis doctrina et omnis disciplina intellectiva ex preexistente fit cognitione. Manifestum est autem hoc speculantibus in omnes; mathematicaeque enim scientiarum per hunc modum fiunt et aliarum unaqueque artium. Similiter autem et circa orationes quaeque per sillogismos et quae per inductione; utraque enim per prius nota faciunt doctrinam, haec quidem accipientes tamquam a notis, ille vero demonstrantes universale per id quod manifestum est singulare.*

external but similar to itself (*nihil scitorum cognoscitur quando invenitur, quia non cognoscitur, nisi simile simili*), according to the doctrine of Empedocles (1.1.5, 18); (3) the forms of both the sensible and intelligible realities come from forms that exist separately and that impress in realities like a “seal in wax” (1.1.5, 18); (4) among such forms, the strongest are those which cause mutations in an essential manner, from the interiority of the subject in which they reveal themselves (*debilis non agit in fortius ... exeteriora debiliora sunt; ergo relinquitur quod intrinsecus habet quibus perficitur, et non accipit per inventionem vel doctrinam*) (1.1.5, 18); and (5) the form of virtue, like any other form, does not generate itself by study and doctrine (*per studium et doctrinam*). If virtue were teachable, as the same Socrates observes in *Meno*, when people were educated by good masters they would become nothing other than good (1.1.5, 18).

The fundamental doctrine, which according to Albert is founded on the Socratic-Stoic doctrine of reminiscence, is above all a physical theory, which was indicated by Albert as “the most time-honored belief” of Anaxagoras in the “latency of forms” (*de latentia formarum*). The reference to Anaxagoras comes from Aristotle’s *Physics* (187a12) and concerns the idea, also shared by Empedocles and Anaximander, that two contraries are necessarily present together simultaneously in the subject that holds them: one of them is manifest, one is hidden.

The philosophical presupposition of the doctrine, as it was specified by the Arabic philosophical tradition on which Albert depends, is that the cause of movement is an essential and intrinsic part of the subject that experiences the movement. Consequently, the forms that the subject gradually manifest are already extant, even though they are hidden in the subject that receives them (*Phys.* 1.2.11, 33, 78–34, 19; *Metaph.* 1.3.9, 38, 29–37).²⁸ Albert goes on to explain in his commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* that, according to the Platonic-Stoic doctrine, even the intellectual and moral forms in the soul are hidden but actual, like the forms in matter (*An. Post.* 1.1.5, 18). Their manifestation, which consists in the acquisition of knowledge and moral virtue, seems to depend on the fact that the intellect finds them inside itself (*eo quod putabant in se habere intellectum ad virtutem, sicut se habet materia ad formae susceptionem*; 1.1.5, 18). This was, according to Albert, a fundamental error of Theophrastus, whom he judged to have shared, despite being a disciple of Aristotle, the Socratic-Platonic

28 Cf. Aver. *Phys.* 1, comm. 32 G; for Albert’s reliance on the Arabic tradition on the matter of the doctrine of the latency of forms, see Jeck 2001; Twetten and Baldner 2013a, 171–2, 180–2; Twetten, Moulin, and Snyder 2013, 713–21; see also Alb. *Phys.* 1.3.15, 68, 72–69, 21; 8.1.2, 552, 20–50.

doctrine of reminiscence.²⁹ In the Stoic-Platonic perspective, stimulated by sensitive images, which, according to the doctrine of Empedocles, the intellect recognizes only when they are similar to its interior images, the intellect learns by remembering. From this point of view, following the further proposal of Damascene and Gregory of Nyssa, explicitly cited by Albert, the learning of doctrines and the habit of praiseworthy actions are only instruments through which the intellect repossesses itself. Distanced from passion and images of fantasy, it becomes, according to the Aristotelian terminology, *adeptus*, that is, perfectly realized. From that very moment, syllogisms and induction become unnecessary and the conversion of the intellect towards itself happens spontaneously, freely, and easily. Reason experiences in itself the divine origin of all the virtues, be they intellectual or moral (1.1.5, 18).

To summarize: Albert has access to an as yet unidentified source of information about the Platonic *Meno*. Through such a document he identifies in the *Meno* the source of the Socratic doctrine of the identity between virtue and science, as well as of the closely related doctrine of reminiscence. Furthermore, he points out the consistency between Socratic-Platonic belief and the Stoic theory of the origin and connection of all virtues in wisdom and, studying them from the critical perspective of Aristotle, identifies both the erroneous fundamental premises and consequences of the doctrines. To the Socratic Stoic ideal of natural reason which can only be *perfect*, Albert counterposes the Aristotelian concept of reason, which is only a disposition to acquire all forms of knowledge, precisely because it does not contain any single one of them. The data of experiences, the *phantasmata* produced by the imagination, as far as gnoseology is concerned, as well as the passions, as far as psychology and ethics are concerned, consists in an inevitable element of human nature and, far from representing a contamination of the assumed purity of reason, are instead the matter with which reason interacts in order to form ideas, explanations, and theories, and in order to acquire a unitary vision of itself and the world.

5 The Origin of Virtue: Socrates as Founder of the Stoic Idolatry of Reason

Albert dealt several times with the origin of virtue before his commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* and even before his first commentary on the Aristotelian *Nichomachean Ethics*. In the commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences* (*Sent.*

²⁹ See also Alb. *an.* 1.2.15, 56,10–16; *ibid.* 3.2.5, 184,53–59.

3, d. 36, a. 1, 665b) Albert discusses the idea, explicitly attributed to the Stoics by Augustine, that all the moral virtues are present in the reason of a man who is perfectly *prudens et sapiens* (*Sent.* 3, d. 36, a. 1, 665b). Albert observes that such Stoic idea presupposes that the origin of virtues is divine and criticizes it by confirming the position of Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* 2), who maintained instead that the virtues originate in the habit of exercising virtuous actions (*Sent.* 3, d. 36, a. 1, 666b).³⁰

With exactly the same argument, in *Super ethica* 2 Albert ascribes the doctrine of the divine origin of the virtues to Boethius and Damascene, authorities explicitly cited in the passage of the *Analytica posteriora*, analyzed above, and he criticizes such a doctrine, explaining that it is based on the mistaken Anaxagorean doctrine of the *latentia formarum* (*Super ethica* 2.1.103.92.26–33, 60–64). In *Super ethica* 6 Albert inquires once more into the possible connection of the moral virtues in wisdom (*prudentia*). He reads in Aristotle's text the Socratic paternity of the doctrine, confirms his attribution of the Socratic theory to the Stoics, and criticizes it once more through the same arguments that he employed in the commentary on the *Sentences* and in the second book of the *Super ethica*.

He nevertheless adds one more argument that concerns two different ways of understanding "wisdom": as a perfect wisdom, in which "all the virtues are one together" (*omnes simul habentur*), according to a condition supposed by the Socratic-Stoic theory; and an imperfect wisdom, through which one can be wise according to something but not another, for example, to temperance but not fortitude (*Super ethica* 6.18.595, 511, 10–21). The doctrine of the connection of moral virtues is here once again ascribed to the Stoics, but also to Socrates, and is contrasted with that of Aristotle, whose arguments do not allow, according to Albert, one to accept the idea of a natural connection of the moral virtues in the reason of a wise person (*Super ethica* 6.18.596, 512, 64–65).

Nevertheless, thanks to the conclusions achieved through his study of the doctrine of reminiscence in the passage of his commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* above analyzed and developed in the course of his uninterrupted work of exegesis on the *Corpus Aristotelicum*, Albert goes back to the doctrine of the connection and the origin of virtues contained in the final lines of the sixth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Then, in his second commentary to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he presents an interpretation opposed to the one just examined from his first commentary. He now accredits the doctrine on the basis of Aristotelian reasoning and denies it on the basis of Stoic reasoning (*Ethica* 6.4.5, 461b).

³⁰ Tracey 2013, 366–7.

In accordance with the words of the Aristotelian text (*Eth. Nic.* 6 1145a1–5), Albert emphasizes the strict relationship between moral virtues and wisdom: the latter is not generated independently from the former, but the former cannot exist without the latter. The doctrine was specified in the Aristotelian text precisely though a comparison with Socrates' interpretation, who, once more according to the words of Aristotle himself, had well established the terms of research, albeit developing them erroneously (1144b18–21). Natural characteristics like audacity and strength, which are imperfect and potentially damaging without a rational direction towards a worthy end and without choosing the necessary means to realize it, cannot be the true origin of the authentic virtues (*secundum quas homo simpliciter dicitur bonus*). The individuation of prudence into virtues of the practical intellect, defined as “regulator of every appetite and every desirable or eligible things which belong to the entire life of a man, insofar as he is a man,” was in fact determined by Socrates and, according to Albert, assumed by the Stoics, who maintained that all virtues are kinds of wisdom. Socrates, however, according to what the Aristotelian text refers to as “princeps Stoicorum,” as Albert adds in his commentary, considered all virtues to be kinds of wisdom (*prudentialias existimabat esse omnes virtutes secundum substantiam*). In the light of the doctrine of reminiscence, studied in the commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*, with explicit reference to the *Meno*, the Socratic doctrine appears to Albert to be a complete alternative to the doctrine of Aristotle.

In particular, if science is reminiscence, that is memory of the forms that the soul eternally possesses, the Socratic idea of the identity between *virtutes*, *scientiae*, and *prudentialias* turns out to be, in the eyes of Albert, not so much an argument in favor of the connection of the virtues in reason as rather of their necessary separation. If virtues are divine gifts, present in human reason, in fact, the initial condition, declared in Aristotle's text, is not overcome: there must be men provided with more or less and, in any case different, virtues. The same wisdom, with which virtues are assumed to be identical, considered in accordance with the philosophy of Aristotle, is nothing else but a natural and imperfect disposition. The Socratic Stoic doctrine reveals, together with its paradoxes, the limits of its arguments too, which, despite the attempt to provide a philosophical foundation of the dignity of human reason, exposed it to laughter. Albert takes up this same attempt, convinced that he can find the correct answers in the philosophy of Aristotle.

Wisdom, capable of directing the passions towards appropriate aims and of using the correct means to perform virtuous acts, is a matter of the practical intellect, not a gift of nature. It is the result of the care by which man actualizes the potentiality of his rational nature, opening himself to the experiences of the circumstances which he must face, interpreting them and returning to act

in an ever wiser manner (*prudens*). The result of the development and of the moral progress of man, Albert points out in the final lines of his commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* 6, nevertheless does not finish in a self-referential improvement of wisdom, nor in active, civil, or political intervention in the world. Wisdom is certainly the virtue, Albert says together with Aristotle, capable of directing and connecting all the others. It does it, however, by subordinating itself to the most noble guide of knowledge (*sapientia*), virtue of the speculative intellect, which invites man to look beyond the world in which he finds himself operating, at the intellectual and divine world from which he derives, and towards which he, exactly because he is a man, continually tends (*Ethica* 6.4.5, 461b).

6 Conclusions

In the light of Albert's arguments discussed above, we can now propose an interpretation of his unusual association of Socrates with the Stoics. According to Albert, Socrates is master of the Stoics because, with the doctrine of reminiscence documented in the Platonic *Meno*, he furnishes the Stoics with the theoretical arguments through which they can discuss the perfection of human reason, which is the origin of all truth and of all virtues. Yet he does not call the Stoics "Socratic," despite their having inherited his teachings, just as he does not call Socrates "Anaxagorean" or "Empedoclean," despite the fact that he believes that his doctrine of reminiscence is based on that of Anaxagoras' *latentia formarum* and on Empedocles' doctrine of knowledge *similes simili*. Albert does, however, refer to as Stoics all the authors whose doctrines can be, in his eyes, traced back to Socrates' doctrine of reminiscence, which he interprets as the main theoretical foundation of the most characteristic theory of the Stoic philosophy, that is the idea of perfect reason.

According to the Albertinian historiographical interpretation, like Socrates, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and Theophrastus who are Stoics, because they built the premises of Stoic philosophy, Boethius, Augustine, Damascene, and Gregory of Nyssa, who accepted its theoretical consequences, are heirs to Socratic, Platonic and Stoic philosophy.

For all of these authors virtues are neither learnt nor taught but are present in the soul, which discovers them in itself, detaching itself from the false images of sensibility and passions tied to them, purifying its nature and removing hindrance (*depurando naturam et auferendo impedimentum*). The soul learns nothing which it did not already know, not even virtue, which is present within it, as divine gift: this is the *Meno*'s paradox, and this is the teaching of Socrates, *princeps Stoicorum*.

Abbreviations

Abelard Abelardus (Abelard.)

SB *Theologia "Summi boni"*

TC *Theologia Christiana*

TS *Theologia Scholarium*

Aelred Aelredus de Rievaulx (Aelr.)

Hom. *Homiliae de oneribus prophetis Isaiae*

Serm. Sermones I–CLXXXII (Collectiones Clarae uallensis prima, Clarae uallensis secunda et Dunelmensis, collectio Radingensis, sermones Lincolnenses, sermo LXXIX a Matthaeo Rieuallensi seruatus)

Albert Albertus Magnus (Alb.)

An. Post. *Analytica posteriora*, ed. Borgnet 2

An. Pr. *Analytica priora*, ed. Borgnet 1

An. *De anima*

Caus. et proc. *De causis et processu universitatis*

Eth. *Ethica*, ed. Borgnet 7

Praed. *De praedicamentis*, ed. Borgnet 1

Phys. *Physica*

Pol. *Politica*, ed. Borgnet 8

S. theol. *Summa de mirabili scientia Dei* [Summa theologiae]

Somn. Vig. *De somno et vigilia*, ed. Borgnet 9

Sup. Ethica *Super Ethica*

Top. *Topica*, ed. Borgnet 2

Apuleius Apuleius (Apul.)

De Deo Socr. *De deo Socratis*

De dogm. Plat. *De Platone et eius dogmate*

Aristotle Aristoteles (Arist.)

An. Post. *Analitica Posteriora*

Arnobius Arnobius maior (Arn.)

Adv. nat. *Adversus nationes*

Aulus Gellius (Gell.)

NA *Noctes Atticae*

Averroes

Phys. *Aristotelis De physico auditu libri octo cum Averrois Cordubensis variis in eosdem Commentariis*

Bartholomew of Lucca Ptolomaeus de Lucca (Ptol. de Lucc.)

De regim. *Continuatio Thomae de Aquino "De regimine principum"*

Christian of Stavelot Christianus Stabulensis (Chris. Stabul.)

Lib. gener. *Expositio super Librum generationis*

Cicero (Cic.)

Acad. post. Academica posteriora

Acad. Pr. Academica priora sive Lucullus

Div. De divinatione

Fin. De finibus bonorum et malorum

Inv. rhet. De inventione

Nat. D. De natura deorum

Off. De officiis

Or. Orator

Tusc. Tusculanae disputationis

Eckhart Eckhardus (Eckh.)

LW Meister Eckhart: Die lateinischen Werke

In Exod. Expositio in Exodum

In Ioh. Expositio in Iohannem

Freculf Frechulfus Lexoviensis (Frech.)

Hist. Historiarum libri XII

Gaius Marius Victorinus (Mar. Vict.)

In Cic. Rhet. Explanaciones in Ciceronis Rhetoricam

Hugh of Saint Victor Hugo de Sancto Uictore (Hug. Vict.)

Didasc. Didascalicon de studio legendi

Isidor of Seville Isidorus Hispalensis (Isid.)

Etym. Etymologiarum sive Originum libri XX

Jan Hus Iohannes Hus (Ioh. Hus)

*Quodl. Quodlibet (Disputationis de Quolibet Pragae in Facultate Artium mense
Ianuario anni 1411 habitae Enchiridion)*

Jerome Hieronymus (Hier.)

C. Ruf. Apologia aduersus libros Rufini

Epist. Epistolae

In Ezech Hieronymus, Commentarii in Ezechielem

Adv. Iovinian. Aduersus Iouinianum

In Is. Commentarii in Isaiam

C. Pel. Dialogi contra Pelagianos libri tres n. 1

John of Salisbury Iohannes Sarisberiensis (Ioh. Sarisb.)

Metal. Metalogicon

Policr. Policraticus

Lactantius Lucius Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius (Lact.)

Ira. De ira Dei

Epit. Epitome diuinarum institutionum

Inst. Divinae Institutiones

Macrobius Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius (Macr.)

Sat. Saturnalia

Minucius Felix (Min. Fel.)

Oct. Octavius

Peter the Chanter Petrus Cantor (Petr. Cant.)

Verb. abbrev. Summa quae dicitur Verbum abbreviatum

Peter John Olivi Petrus Iohannis Olivi (Ioh. Oliv.)

In Eccl. Lectura super Ecclesiasten

Plato (Plat.)

In Chalcid. Tim. Timaeus, a Calcidio translatus commentarioque instructus

Quintilian Quintilianus (Quint.)

Inst. or. Institutio oratoria

Rabanus Maurus Hrabanus Maurus (Hrab. Maur.)

In Matth. Expositio in Matthaeum

Robert Grosseteste Robertus Grossateste (Robert. Gross.)

An. Post. Commentarius in Libros Analyticorum Posteriorum Aristoteli

Salimbene de Adam (Salimb.)

Cron. Cronica

Seneca (Sen.)

Benef. De beneficiis

Ep. Epistulae morales ad Lucilium

Tertullian Tertullianus (Tert.)

Anim. De anima

Apol. Apologeticum

Nat. Ad nationes

Thomas Aquinas

De Mal. Quaestiones disputatae de malo

Sup. Sent. III Scriptum super libros Sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi

Sent. Ethic. Sententia libri ethicorum, cura et studio fratrum praedicatorum

S. Th. Summa theologiae

*Sup. Sent. II Scriptum super libros Sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi episcopi
Parisiensis*

Thomas of York Thomas Eboracensis (Thom. Eborac.)

Sap. Sapientiale

William of Conches Guillelmus de Conches (Guill. de Conch.)

In Boeth. Glossae super Boethium

Sup. Plat. Glossae super Platonem

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Socrates in Byzantium

Michele Trizio

Introduction

As the inheritors of the classical tradition, Byzantine scholars were devoted readers of Ancient Greek literature and philosophy. For Socrates in particular, in many ways Byzantine scholars enjoyed a more fortunate position than their Medieval Western colleagues, who had almost no direct access to Plato's dialogues. In fact, the Byzantines had the benefit of a vast array of sources differing not so much from our own. They regularly read and copied Plato,¹ and, at least to a limited extent, had Xenophon's *Memorabilia* available. Diogenes Laertius and the *Suda*, a tenth-century Byzantine lexicon of thirty thousand entries that incorporated information from a range of (extant and lost) antique sources, offered biographical material unavailable to scholars of the other Mediterranean civilizations. Furthermore, unlike their Western brethen, the Byzantines studied, among other literary witnesses of Socrates, the Neoplatonic commentaries, which they deemed essential tools for understanding and interpreting the Platonic texts. However, classical and post-classical Greek literary sources were not the only channel for the Byzantine reception of Socrates and Socratism; Christianity also played a role in the formation and consolidation of the Byzantine image of Socrates. Quite a few Church Fathers taught that Socrates' mission and his grim fate overlapped with Christ's in that both died in their unapologetic pursuit for truth.

Importantly, Byzantine scholars did not slavishly follow the available sources on Socrates and the Socratic heritage. They developed hitherto unknown hermeneutical strategies—including lifting and applying the model of Socrates, his followers, and his persecutors onto their contemporaneous situation, in which they identify themselves with the unjustly persecuted Socrates—and thereby earned themselves a prominent place within the historical reception of Socrates. Even while dredging earlier sources and debates—such as the Neoplatonists or the Patristic appropriation of Socrates—they managed to revive them with traces of originality. In this chapter I shall first outline the role

¹ The literature on the approximately 250 Greek manuscripts preserving Plato's work is vast. For overviews, see Wilson 1962; Brumbaugh 1990.

played by the late antique heritage in the Byzantine reception of Socrates and the way the Medieval Greek scholars elaborated on it. Afterwards, I will discuss the most important innovations in the hermeneutics of Socrates introduced in Byzantium.

1 The Early and Middle Byzantine Socrates

As mentioned, Byzantine scholars had access to biographic and doxographic sources unavailable to their Western counterparts. Alongside the *Suda*, Diogenes Laertius' *Life of the Philosophers*, and the scholiastic corpora on Plato's work,² including Neoplatonist works, one must also mention Photius' *Bibliotheca*, a comprehensive account of the books owned or read by the erudite patriarch (c. 810–893 CE), which contains several ancient anecdotes about Socrates' life.³ Furthermore, Socrates often appears in other sources of this period, especially belletristic pieces, as an example of someone who has been unjustly persecuted or who encouraged his interlocutors to overcome the opinions of the many.⁴ For instance, the mid-twelfth-century Byzantine novel *Hysmine and Hysminias*, by the otherwise unknown Eumathios (or Eustathios) Makrembolites, portrays just such a Socrates. Here, Hysminias, a herald, narrates his arrival from his native town Eurycomis to the town of Aulicomis (a fictitious name), a place he describes as a *locus amoenus*. While recalling the sumptuous hospitality of the curious but polite inhabitants of Aulicomis, he claims to have felt at the center of attention like Socrates among his disciples (1.3.11–12). Clearly, to employ this analogy, the author must have had reason to assume the average reader's familiarity with Socrates' life, regardless of their actual knowledge of Plato's dialogues.

Such tropes are not central to the present chapter, just as late antique and Byzantine logical works occasionally cite Socrates' name to impose some essential or accidental property onto an individual. Nonetheless, traces of more interesting references to Socrates do occur. For example, Michael Psellos (d. c. 1078) rhetorically addresses his unenthusiastic students by recalling his restless nights studying classical philosophical texts to prepare his classes. Psellos regrets that, unlike the most important disciples of ancient philosophers, his own students display no interest in learning and no passion

² Edited by Greene 1938; Cufalo 2007.

³ See, e.g., Phot. *Bibl.* cod. 259, 486a7–8 (on Antiphon discussing with Socrates); codd. 246–8 (excerpts from Aelius Aristides).

⁴ See, e.g., Arethas of Caesaria, *Scripta Minora*, 25, 227.15–16; 47, 317.4–5 Westerink.

to come to exceed their master. In particular he contrasts his students' boredom with the acute interest displayed by Simmias and Cebes (in *Phd.* 85e3–86b2, 92a6–c2, and *passim*) when objecting to Socrates' arguments for the immortality of the soul (*Oratoria Minora* 24, 85.33–55). While Psellos here may not have elaborated a deeper interpretation of Socrates' arguments in the *Phaedo*, he nevertheless reveals the Byzantine scholars' familiarity with the Platonic corpus. Psellos, and many others like him, mastered Plato's dialogues to such an extent that they could freely cite Platonic passages for rhetorical purposes.

The work known as *Chiliades*, composed in verse by twelfth-century Byzantine scholar John Tzetzes (c. 1110–1180), also mentions some Socratic anecdotes. For instance, referring to Socrates' reply to Crito near the end of the *Phaedo* (115d), Tzetzes states that, while saying that he is about to leave for a better place, Socrates had to pay for the hemlock himself (8.26.181, 306.225–307.232).⁵ Tzetzes also recalls (11.16.378, 449.529–450.541) the proverb “and whether indeed my eyes were running like pumpkins,” which occurs in the dialogue between Socrates and Strepsiades in Aristophanes' *Clouds* (327). Finally, Tzetzes refers to Porphyry's explanation, in his *Exegesis on Ilias* (A 198), of Socrates' *daimonion* as a manifestation of the prognostic faculty of his soul, reminding modern readers that the Neoplatonists were an important medium for the Byzantine reception of Socrates. (*Ex. in Hom. Il.*, 47.22 ff).⁶

Turning our attention to the philosophical works of this period, we see an even greater involvement of doctrinal issues concerning the Socratic persona. One such case is that of Eustratios of Nicaea (c. 1050–1120).

1.1 *Eustratios of Nicaea*

Besides writing theological works, Eustratios, the learned bishop of Nicaea, wrote commentaries on several Aristotelian works after the request of his patron, the princess Anna Komnene (1083–1153)—specifically, on *Posterior Analytics* 2 and *Nicomachean Ethics* 1 and 6.⁷ In them he displays a Platonizing attitude towards Aristotle's text blended with Christian corrections to the teaching of Plato and the Neoplatonists.⁸ Eustratios' understanding of the Platonic Socrates harkens back to the late antique Christian debate on Socrates

5 As the editor of the text suggests, this passage is reminiscent of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, 36.6–7 (on Phocion's death).

6 Text discussed and emended by Sluiter 1992, 478–9.

7 On Eustratios, see Cacouros 2002.

8 See Trizio 2009 and 2014.

as a forerunner of Christ. Yet, in what follows, I shall demonstrate that though connected to an earlier debate, Eustratios' approach is quite novel.

In *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.5 1095b22–23, Aristotle states that people of superior refinement and of active disposition identify happiness with honor, which is the end of political life vis-à-vis the pleasures pursued by men of the most vulgar kind, on the one hand, and with the intellectual endeavors proper of the few who chose philosophical contemplation as their way of life, on the other. Eustratios describes those who identify happiness with honor as those who sacrifice everything else for this goal in order to achieve political happiness. He then distinguishes between two further categories: first, those like Achilles, who see virtue as a means to obtain glory, preferring a shorter life full of glory over a longer life without it; and, second, those who live according to the perfection of a virtuous life and, like Socrates in Plato's *Crito*, even accepting unfair condemnation despite the opportunity to escape. Oddly, Eustratios then apologizes to readers for introducing further examples: those who identify their full perfection with dying at a tyrant's hand in a way that pleases God; and, those who willingly become hermits to contemplate God. These, concludes Eustratios, were unknown to Aristotle, and are instantiated by Christian martyrs and monks, respectively (*In Eth. Nic.* 1, 35.25–32).⁹

Here, Eustratios revives the earlier Patristic debate on Socrates, whom some had regarded as a Christian proto-martyr and whom others judged inferior to the Christian martyrs.¹⁰ The idea that Christian martyrs and monks exemplified an authentically philosophical life, however, was not new. In fact, it occurs consistently in early Christian literature.¹¹ Eustratios' originality lies in situating the Patristic debate over Socrates within the framework of Aristotle's distinction in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1 and 10 between the political and contemplative life, with the former inferior to the latter.¹² Similarly, the fifth-century Theodoret of Cyrrhus interpreted *Republic* 475d–e and *Theaetetus* 176a–b to argue that the Platonic escape from the world and the assimilation with God does not really apply to Socrates, but rather to the Christian monks who practice askesis (*Graec. aff. cur.* 12.26–27).¹³ Eustratios goes even further than Theodoret in stating not only that Socrates (or any other pagan philosopher) could achieve at most what Aristotle defined as civil or political

9 On this text, see Trizio 2016, 218–19.

10 Cf. Wilson 2007, 141–69, and, for example, Franek (in this volume).

11 See the classic Dölger 1940; Leclercq 1952; Penco 1960; Malingray 1961. See also the more recent Urbano 2013.

12 On which see the fundamental Natali 2001, 111–76.

13 On this text, see Siniosoglou 2008, 112–46; Papadogiannakis 2012, 78–80; Urbano 2013, 279–86.

happiness, but also that Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* concerns no more than political happiness. As a consequence of this, in Eustratios' view the authentic contemplative and theoretical life, which the Stagirite regarded as the purely philosophical life, applies only to Christian monks and will be fully achieved only in the future life.¹⁴

Indeed, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle himself criticizes Socrates' moral intellectualism, the idea that virtues consist in possessing knowledge,¹⁵ but he would hardly have excluded a philosopher from the happiest life of contemplation. This is exactly what Eustratios does: on the one hand, he confines the pagan philosophers to Aristotle's diminished happiness consisting in political life; on the other, he reserves the happiest possible life, that of contemplation, to Christian monks and ascetics. In every respect, exploiting Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* in this way was unprecedented. In fact, by commenting on the Aristotelian work at hand, Eustratios sets on new basis the late ancient Christian interpretation of Socrates as a philosopher.

1.2 *Soterichos Panteugenēs: Staging Socrates in a Twelfth-Century Christological Controversy*

Whereas Eustratios is thought to revive the late antique debate over the Christian Socrates, Soterichos Panteugenēs, another twelfth-century learned theologian, goes even further by impersonating Socrates within a dramatic theological controversy: the very nature of Christ's sacrifice through the Crucifixion. Although detailing this controversy goes beyond this chapter's scope, Soterichos' strategy is worth a brief mention.¹⁶

A deacon at St Sophia in Constantinople and later patriarch-elect of Antioch, Soterichos was an erudite churchman admired for his education even by his fiercest opponents. When he had to defend his position within the controversy, he wrote a Platonizing dialogue that in the eyes of his contemporaries—in particular the historian John Kinnamos—convincingly imitated the Platonic model (*Hist.* 177).¹⁷ The original text of the dialogue has not survived, unfortunately, but stylistic borrowings from Plato riddle the extant texts of indirect witnesses preserved by both Soterichos' opponents and his sympathizers.¹⁸ Soterichos has staged a fictitious dialogue between himself and a friend, called Philon, presenting Soterichos' theological standpoints via

14 See Trizio 2016, 199–223.

15 Cf., e.g., Arist. *Nic. Eth.* 1.5 1095b32–1096a3; 6.13 1144b28–30.

16 On this controversy, see Magdalino 1993, 279–89; Kazhdan and Wharton Epstein 1995, 160–1; Felmy 2011, 218–19; Trizio 2017.

17 On the dialogue's style and content, see Spingou 2017.

18 The fragments have been collected by Dräseke 1886.

typical features of the Platonic Socrates, such as the *elenchus* and the intensive questioning of the interlocutor meant to reveal his ignorance.

Soterichos does not, however, simply imitate Plato; he impersonates Socrates as well. Between 1156 and 1157, after Soterichos had already been appointed patriarch-elect of Antioch, a Synod was formally summoned to investigate Soterichos' positions. Although the synod would depose Soterichos from his see, what strikes the modern scholar is Soterichos' strategy during his self-defense before the synod. On this occasion he composed an apology which, though shorter than its model, suggests that Soterichos imagined himself as a Socrates addressing the Athenian jury. Soterichos blasts his opponents as "sycophants" (cf. *Cri.* 44e, 45a), those infamous individuals who lived by extorting rich citizens (*Apology* 330.5). When addressing the synod, he regrets that his opponents are testing him with sophistry (*Apology* 329.2). In fact, the form ἀπεπειρώτω used by Soterichos occurs in Plato several times (*Tht.* 157c6, *Resp.* 360a4, *Prt.* 341d8) in the sense of "testing" or "being tested" by an argument in a discussion. It is explicitly associated with sophistry at *Theaetetus* 154e1. Finally, in his earlier *Dialogue*, Soterichos had extensively used everyday language expressions, such as ὦγαθὲ ("well" sentences such as "well said") or ὦ φίλη μοι κεφαλὴ ("oh my dear soul"), taken from Plato's dialogues.¹⁹ In short, Soterichos appropriates Socrates' defense from the charge of impiety in order to defend himself from the similar charge of heterodoxy. The content of Soterichos' dialogue and apology is clearly a theological one, but at the same time Soterichos' Platonizing style and his identification with the Socratic persona could hardly escape the attention of contemporary readers of these works. For both Soterichos and his readers to insert classical allusions in a text was a token of the social prestige they acquired through classical learning and *paideia*. However, Soterichos does something more than embellishing his works with a few quotes from the classical material. In fact, he assumes the Socratic persona in order to inform his readers that within that theological controversy he has been unfairly persecuted by the enemies of truth. In this respect, he anticipates the later and more explicit impersonation of Socrates by Barlaam of Calabria.

2 Late Byzantium

In this section I discuss the two most important case studies for the late Byzantine reception of Socrates the philosopher: Theodore Metochites and

¹⁹ Other Platonic modes of expressions found in Soterichos' dialogue are listed in Spingou 2017, 126.

Barlaam of Calabria. Both scholars wrote in the first half of the fourteenth century, one of the most important periods in the Byzantine intellectual history.²⁰ A prominent figure of the early fourteenth century, Metochites offers modern readers profound and original literary insights into Socrates and his alleged position within the history of ancient philosophy. Barlaam is a controversial figure, a pungent intellectual who gained prominence by exploiting political ties before being disgraced during his clash with those in his era's most conservative monastic milieu. Within the Byzantine reception of Socrates, Barlaam counts as the most powerful epigone of Plato's master in the Greek Middle Ages. As I shall demonstrate later in this chapter, Barlaam identified himself with Socrates and considered his own intellectual endeavor in terms of a revival of the Socratic mission in fourteenth-century Byzantium.

Before doing so, I shall discuss some important references to Socrates and the Socratic persona in the literature of this period. Almost all of them are found in Byzantine epistolography and historiography. Even though these occurrences are not as important as those in Metochites' and Barlaam's work, they nonetheless deserve to be briefly mentioned as they show once again how familiar the ancient sources on Socrates were to the late Byzantine scholars.

2.1 *Socrates the Philosopher in Late Byzantium: An Overview*

Several of what one may define as "minor" references to Socrates in late Byzantine literature are found in letters. In Byzantine epistolography both the sender and the recipient would have been highly educated individuals who shared the same sociolect, or linguistic register, incorporating erudite quotations from classical literature intended to convey both information and feelings. As many of these letters were transmitted in letter-collections, the presence of this highly classicizing register signaled for later readers that senders and receivers belonged both to the same *paideia* and to the same social class, that of the highly educated Byzantine elite.²¹

An example can be found in a letter written by John Apokaukos (d. 1233), the metropolite of Naupaktos and a central figure in the Byzantine history of this period. In this text Apokaukos invites the recipient to read his message carefully, for he claims that whoever lifts his head above what is written turns out to be ridiculous in that he walks the air and speculates on the sun, just as Socrates was ridiculed for doing in the comedy—obviously the *Clouds* (Ep. 53.4–6). Aristophanes' parody of Socrates is also mentioned in a theological work composed by John Kantakouzenos (d. 1383). John was the Byzantine

²⁰ See Fryde 2000.

²¹ On this topic, see Riehle 2011.

emperor from 1347 until 1357. Afterwards, he became a monk and composed several theological works concerning the most relevant controversies of the time. In one of these, John endorses the traditional Patristic *topos* of the disagreement among the philosophers vis-à-vis the unity of Christian truth. As examples of disagreement he mentions, among others, Aelius Aristides' critique of Plato (possibly in *To Plato, in Defense of Oratory* and in *To Plato, in Defense of the Four*), Aristophanes' lampoon of Socrates in the *Clouds*, and finally Aristotle's critique (in *Metaph.* A.9 and *Eth. Nic.* 1.6) of Plato's theory of Forms.²²

Michael Gabras (d. after 1350) acted as a scribe and official at the imperial chancery. He is one of the most prolific Byzantine letter writers, with 462 letters sent to 111 addressees in a period spanning 1305 to 1341. Gabras could not resist referring to Socrates in his voluminous correspondence, something which once more suggests that for these *literati* appropriating Socrates' literary figure was somehow a hallmark of high-class literature. In one of his letters, Gabras ventures to compare the recipient with Socrates himself, insofar as, like the historical Socrates, the recipient attracted several citizens around him because of the usefulness of his discourses. Like Socrates, the recipient did not seek others—others sought him (*Ep.* 80, 129.2–13). Even more interesting, though bizarre, is a letter in which Gabras promises the recipient to send a honey-cake with a peculiar bitter-sweet taste which he characterizes with Socrates' theory of the coexistence of contrary terms, such as pleasure and pain, at *Phaedo* 60b. For a highly educated man like himself, embellishing an otherwise ordinary message of a cake's contrary flavors with a Socratic motif seems to have been fairly normal (*Ep.* 428, 661.3–10).

Michael Choniates (d. c. 1222) was one of the most important Byzantine intellectuals of his time. He was the Archbishop of Athens and an ardent book-collector. His letters show that he was in touch with, among others, Eustathios of Thessaloniki, the well-known giant of Byzantine Homeric scholarship. Eustathios was Michael's teacher, and yet in one of his letters Michael complains about his former master's recent failure to reply promptly to his letters. Michael reassures Eustathios, who in the meantime had moved to Thessaloniki, that his fondness for him has not waned. In fact, Choniates claims, the loss of something good is always followed by the appreciation of its true value, and thus he appreciates his master even more now that he is

22 John Kantakouzenos *Refutation of Prochoros Kydones* 4.46–48. It should be mentioned here that among the ancient rhetoricians, Aelius Aristides was one of most favored by Byzantine scholars. On this, see, e.g., Cavallo 1986; Quattrocelli 2008, 2009; Wilson 2009, Pérez Martín 2012; Fontanella 2013, 1–6.

far away. Choniates likens this to the Athenians' realizing how good Socrates was for them only after they had sentenced him to death (*Ep.* 50.2, 4.15–5.18). Furthermore, in his *Discourse to the Patriarch Michael* (Michael III Anchialos, who died in 1178), Michael defends the pivotal role of rhetoric in connection with philosophy and, if I understand the text correctly, to his *theatron*, the erudite circle of pupils and fellows who formed the audience of eloquent speeches both in late antiquity and Byzantium.²³ Choniates claims that within the *theatron* everyone had their souls on fire because of this experience, in the same way as—Choniates emphatically concludes—those who sat around listening to Phaedo recount Socrates' jail-set arguments on the immortality of the soul (80.27–81.2).²⁴ In this case the parallel with the initial scene of Plato's *Phaedo* serves the purpose of describing the excitement and gaze following the rhetorical experience in the *theatron* and once more demonstrates that scholars of Byzantium appropriated Socrates in order to mark the cultural features on which they based their social prestige.²⁵

Byzantine epistolography also includes the letters written by Demetrios Kydones (d. c. 1398), an important Byzantine diplomat and intellectual responsible for the Greek translation of the most important works by the champion of Medieval scholasticism, Thomas Aquinas. The vicissitudes of Kydones' life are the background for a letter written around 1372, where Kydones blames envy and resentment as the cause of his misfortunes. It must have been natural for him to mention the case of Socrates, who died from Meletus' envy, together with that of the mythical Palamedes, who was stoned to death (*Ep.* 37, 71.24–27 Loenertz). Elsewhere, the same Kydones encourages his addressee, whom he labels as “philosopher,” to follow Socrates' example in *Phaedo* 57a–61c in making and cultivating music (*Ep.* 111, 149.11–150.1). In this case as well, Kydones' familiarity with Socrates' literary figure falls within the realm of belletteristic production. Neither Kydones' nor any of the above-mentioned case-studies of late Byzantine writers' appropriation of the Socratic figure matches in importance Theodore Metochites' literary interpretation and appraisal of some of the classical Socratic motifs.

23 On this topic, see Gaul 2011, 15–210.

24 At 81.1 I read Φαίδωνα instead of the Φαίδρον of the printed text. There is a nearly identical passage in a text written by Michael's brother, the historian and theologian Niketas Choniates (d. 1217) (*Orations* 15, 158.14–17). Here the text preserves the correct reading Φαίδωνα.

25 Choniates' other borrowings from Plato's dialogues have been identified in MacDougall 2015.

2.2 *Theodore Metochites on Socratic Irony and Skepticism*

Theodore Metochites (c. 1270–1332) was a Byzantine statesman and scholar who lived during the so-called “early Palaeologan renaissance” that occurred between the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century.²⁶ He wrote the *Semeioseis Gnomikai*, an intellectual self-portrait consisting of one hundred twenty essays on philosophy, ancient history, literature, and human affairs, on the model of late antique works such as Plutarch’s *Moralia* and Maximus of Tyre’s *Dissertationes*.²⁷ In the *Semeioseis* not only does Metochites elaborate on Socratic irony and Plato’s authorial strategy, but he also exploits Socrates’ philosophical persona in order to forge the very identity that a fourteenth-century Byzantine scholar and intellectual should assume.

2.2.1 Theodore Metochites on Socratic Irony

Essay 9 of the *Semeioseis* is devoted to philosophical irony and focuses specifically on Socrates and Plato. Admitting that most wise men of the past and today display irony (εἰρωνεία) in conversations, Metochites states that not all is “wit” (χαριεντίζεσθαι); some display mere “malevolence” (κακότηθεια) and “ill-will” (δύσνοια). The latter two dispositions are dismissed by Metochites as unpleasant and vulgar; he claims that irony and wit flow from good temper both in character and speech. As a consequence, in those who are truly wise, even biting irony, far from being cruel, becomes a virtuous and useful strategy for the purpose of the conversation or, alternatively, is displayed only for the sake of jest (8.1.1–4, 83.18–84.4). Metochites cites Socrates and Plato as providing the most famous instance of philosophic and virtuous irony:

In fact all this can be seen in Plato, or in the Socrates of Plato’s dialogues, or, if you prefer it, indeed in both, a view to which I would rather subscribe. For I do not think that Plato would falsely attribute to Socrates all these things and slanderously bring forward traits totally alien to the character and life of a person most dear to him.

THEODORE METOCHITES *Sem. gnom.* 8.2.1–2, 84.5–10, tr. HULT

Here Metochites shows an acute awareness of the fact that Socrates, as we know him, is mostly a character of Plato’s script. And yet, he implies that Plato’s Socrates can hardly differ from the historic one. Metochites also cites as-yet-unidentified sources discussing Socrates’ and Plato’s irony and

26 On Metochites’ life and work, see Ševčenko 1962, 1971, and 1975; Wilson 1983, 256–64; De Vries and van der Velden 1987; Fryde 2000, 322–36; Bydén 2011.

27 On the *Semeioseis Gnomikai*, see Bydén 2002a; Hult 2004; Featherstone 2011.

conjectures that Socrates' unjust death was caused by people who misjudged the Socratic *elenchus* and irony as the malevolent ill-will of an unsociable individual (8.2.5–8, 84.18–86.4). In what follows, the author insists on the historical truthfulness of Plato's Socrates, but this time Metochites cites actual sources supporting his appraisal of Socrates' irony. These are Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and Aeschines of Sphettus' dialogues. As the editor of the *Semeioseis* rightly points out, it is unlikely that Metochites had access to more than the few fragments of Aeschines' dialogues known to modern scholars. Indeed, he probably took this list of ancient witnesses on Socrates from the previously mentioned *Dissertationes* by Maximus of Tyre (18.5.2–4). More importantly, Metochites states that with respect to irony,

there is, however, much of Socrates in Plato or of Plato in Socrates, or, to put it differently, let both, as I just said, have a common Hermes, according to the proverb.

THEODORE METOCHITES *Sem. gnom.* 8.3.3, 86.12–15, tr. HULT

In other words, both Socrates and Plato display the same virtuous irony when they confront their interlocutors. This is a rather bizarre statement if one considers that, whereas Socrates does indeed talk with different characters in the dialogues, Plato famously does not appear in his own fictions. However, Metochites probably implies that the irony displayed by the literary Socrates (which is indeed a Platonic creation) does not differ from that of the historical Socrates; or, alternatively, it might be that Metochites again (implicitly) asserts the authenticity of Plato's Socrates and that, Plato being the disciple of Socrates, Plato must have shared his teacher's irony, and this because both were philosophers and not mere rhetoricians, a theme that Metochites discusses throughout the *Semeioseis*. In fact, Metochites' appraisal of Socrates' and Plato's irony and wit is probably best understood in light of the strong emphasis on the antithesis between philosophy and rhetoric developed by Plato and present in the Platonic tradition, the difference being that, whereas the former aims at vehiculating truth, the latter merely attempts at influencing and deceiving individuals.²⁸

This antithesis is pervasive throughout the *Semeioseis*, but is directly addressed in essays 24–26. Metochites supports it by appealing to Plutarch and

²⁸ Cf., e.g., Theodore Metochites *Sem. gnom.*, 9.2.2–3.7, 90.27–94.25; 18.2.3–7, 166.6–168.4; 18.3.5–7, 168.31–170.12; 71.9.3, 234.10–14. These passages are cited and discussed in Bydén 2002a, 277–8.

Synesius, to whom he devotes essays 71 and 18 of the *Semeioseis*, respectively.²⁹ If it is true, on the one hand, that philosophy differs from rhetoric in that the latter focuses only on the external appearance of the content, it is also true, nevertheless, that philosophy cannot overlook language and eloquence in expressing its message. And whereas mixing philosophy with rhetoric would harm both (26.2.5–8, 216.1–12),³⁰ a certain amount of eloquence would be more than welcome if philosophy wishes to fulfill its aim (26.1.4–7, 212.27–214.12; 71.9.1–3, 234.1–14). Since, according to Metochites, one's thought can rarely be fully expressed—for even the most articulate speech cannot capture inner thoughts of the mind (9.2.3, 92.4–7; 9.3.2, 92.22–6)—philosophers must settle for a simple and unadorned style (26.1.1–4, 212.13–214.4; 26.2.2, 214.21–5). Blasting Aristotle's brachylogical and obscure style as pretentious and disingenuous (essay 3), Metochites recommends the natural eloquence of Plutarch and Synesius. He enjoys Synesius' elegant and charming style despite the rough diction and rejection of Atticism in favor of a more modern style (18.2.2, 166.3–6; 18.3.2–4, 168.17–30).³¹ Metochites praises Plutarch for choosing clarity over elegance (71.9.1–3, 234.1–14). In both cases, the author implies, “eloquence” (εὐστομία) prevails over the purely ornamental “beauty of the expression” (εὐφωνία).³² And this is in the end also the reason why Plato (according to Metochites, essay 24) wrote dialogues instead of speeches.

Metochites' mention of Atticism is not accidental and should be understood against the background of the terrific fortune of the authors of the Second and Third Sophistics among the Byzantine *literati* of the time.³³ Atticism is frequently mentioned and discussed in the *Semeioseis*, but it does not always count as a positive feature in Metochites' evaluation of classical authors. Just as he did in essay 18 in the case of Synesius, in essay 15, on Flavius Josephus, Metochites contrasts this author's clarity and simple prose with Atticism, here seen as artificially elegant (15.3.1, 148.11–15). By contrast, in essay 17, on the style of the Alexandrians, he denounces the asperity of the “Egyptians” vis-à-vis Atticism and Asianism, here regarded as gracious and pleasant (17.4.4, 164.8–13). Earlier in the same essay, Metochites had mentioned the case of those who have been educated in Syria and Phoenicia, such as Porphyry and Maximus of Tyre, whose style is characterized as smooth (17.3.2–3, 162.7–18), and the case of Lucian and Libanius, who although a fervent Atticist, nevertheless managed

29 On essay 71 (on Plutarch), see Tartaglia 1987.

30 See Bydén 2002a, 278.

31 See Bydén 2002a, 279–80.

32 See Bydén 2002a, 266–77.

33 On this, see Gaul 2011.

to write in a pleasant and unconstrained manner (17.3.4–5, 162.18–28). More relevant to the scope of our survey is a reference to Atticism in essay 20, on Xenophon, where Metochites' mention of the traditional nickname for Xenophon ("the Attic bee") opens the way for a further treatment of the Socratic question. At first, Metochites refers to Xenophon's *Memorabilia* as confirmation of the historical authenticity of Plato's Socrates (20.1.4–5, 184.24–186.6). Then, however, he tackles the Socratic question with striking lucidity:

The whole thing is a drama about Socrates, by Plato; Plato presents his view through Socrates, but still, some of it he has actually learned from Socrates, deems it worthy of record and writing, and uses it to try to instruct the readers.

THEODORE METOCHITES *Sem. gnom.* 20.1.6, 186.7–11, tr. HULT

Taking a cue from the contemporary debate over the proper linguistic register of high-class literature, Metochites treats Socrates as the perfect example of a philosopher's mastering rhetoric without being himself a rhetorician or, worse, a sophist. Furthermore, as demonstrated by the last passage cited above, Metochites displays an acute awareness of the complexity of the Socratic question which predates the modern assessment of the same issue. Metochites does not provide examples of the Socratic doctrines that filtered in Plato's thought, but he is perfectly aware of the fictional nature of Plato's Socrates. He identifies as purely Socratic irony, eloquence, sarcasm and, as I will now demonstrate, ignorance.

2.2.2 Theodore Metochites and the Skeptical Socrates

Metochites does not confine himself to discussing Socrates' irony and the authenticity of Plato's Socrates. In *Semeioseis* essays 29 and 61, he refers to Socrates and Plato as the forerunners of ancient skepticism. In particular, Metochites refers to Socrates' mention in *Protagoras* (339c) of a *dictum* traditionally ascribed to Pittacus, namely that it is hard to be a good man since—Metochites comments—experience testifies that everything changes and nothing endures (29.1.1, 24.24–6). The link between Socrates and ancient skepticism is in no way unprecedented in earlier Greek literature,³⁴ but the interesting thing is that Metochites elaborates his own discourse on skepticism on the basis of a negative dogmatism rooted in the Christian tradition, rather than in the works of the skeptics themselves.³⁵ In fact, Metochites' work,

34 See, e.g., Bett 2009.

35 On Metochites' skepticism, see the excellent Bydén 2002b.

including his poems, is imbued with a distinctive pessimism about men's capacity to attain the truths appropriate to knowledge and to moral agency. In essay 61, Metochites ascribes to the ancient skeptics this very negative dogmatism, here qualified as a positive feature.³⁶ Skepticism should not be dismissed as mere logomachy, but is rather a helpful approach in revealing the contingency and fallibility of human knowledge (61, 210.13–22). According to Metochites, Plato played an essential role in this rejection of dogmatism (61, 210.22–211.42). In this he followed his master Socrates, who devoted his entire life to unmasking the presumption of knowledge in his interlocutors (61, 211.43–58).

Intriguingly, the skeptical Socrates occurs in a letter written by Metochites' most famous disciple, Nikephoros Gregoras, between 1322 and 1326, possibly a few years before the composition of the *Semeioseis*. Gregoras opens his letter by recalling that Plato was not a dogmatic philosopher (*Ep.* 30, 99.1–4).³⁷ In order to support his claim, he cites a passage from the *Gorgias* (470e–471d) where Socrates and Polus discuss the view that the unjust are not truly happy (*Ep.* 30, 99.4–7).³⁸ When Polus offers the case of Archelaus, the tyrant of Macedonia, as someone who, although unjust, appears to be happy and wealthy, Socrates replies that he is not in the position to determine whether Archelaus is happy, for he has no direct knowledge of this man. In Gregoras' view, Socrates' reticence in answering signifies the skeptics' suspension of judgement. In this, he implies, Plato and Socrates agree, for in the end Socrates is Plato's "mask" (προσωπείον) (*Ep.* 30, 99.7). Furthermore, just as others had succumbed before him, Gregoras could also not resist identifying himself with Socrates and Gregoras' own opponents—whom he first smears as Telchins after the example of Callimachus—with the likes of Meletus, Anytus, Callicles, and Polus (the latter two being Socrates' antagonists in *Gorgias*), bold young men who, according to Gregoras, were preparing for him the deadly hemlock (*Ep.* 148, 363.200–203). In fact, in his commentary on Synesius' *On Dreams*, Gregoras introduces *Phaedo* 67b–d, where Socrates hopes to attain in the future life that for which he had prepared himself by separating as far as possible his soul from the body, as Plato's own view presented through the Socratic persona (*On Synesius' 'On Dreams'*, D 156, 137).

Let us end our digression on Gregoras and return to Theodore Metochites. The *Semeioseis gnomikai* are not his only writings that refer to Socrates; Metochites had earlier composed a protreptic work defending the value

36 A summary of essay 61 is found in Bydén 2002b, 184–5.

37 This letter is also briefly discussed in Bydén 2002b, 205 n. 77.

38 Text discussed by Bydén 2002b, 205 n. 77.

of education and culture against traditional monastic mistrust.³⁹ Known as *Ethikos*, this work addresses an unknown young man and praises education as extremely useful both in private life and in politics.⁴⁰ Among the many classical authorities referred to by Metochites, Socrates is cited as an example of a wise man who opened and explored with his disciples the “treasures that the wise men of the past have left in their books” (*Ethikos* 20, 92.6–8). Metochites is here elaborating on Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* (1.6.14) and endorses the characterization of Socrates as a literate man vis-à-vis Plato’s Socrates, who is mostly confined within the realm of oral culture.⁴¹ This is unsurprising, if one thinks that the *Ethikos* celebrates book-culture as essential to one’s life against the monastic disdain for secular education. Thus, whereas the *Semeioseis* display an appraisal of Socratic irony and skepticism based mostly on Plato’s dialogues, the *Ethikos* provides a Xenophon-based account of Socrates, in which the latter functions as testimony of Metochites’ point of view within an early fourteenth century controversy.

3 Barlaam the Calabrian on Socratic Ignorance

In this chapter I demonstrate how Byzantine scholars showed both a distinct awareness of the antique and late antique debates over Socrates and the Socratic heritage and also the capacity to elaborate new hermeneutics. As the case of the eleventh-/twelfth-century commentator Eustratios of Nicaea demonstrates, even when referring to a late antique understanding of Socrates, the Byzantines were capable of reviving it in an original manner. More than this, the cases of Theodore Metochites and Barlaam of Calabria prove that Socrates and Socratism were subject to an important process of appropriation that does not harken back to the earlier period.

Barlaam the Calabrian (d. 1348) was a Basilian monk from Calabria known for his commitment to philosophy.⁴² Probably around 1325 Barlaam moved to Greece and lived between Thessaloniki and Constantinople. In Thessaloniki he devoted himself to astronomy and soon became another key figure in

39 Edited in Polemis 1995.

40 See Metzler 2007, 300.

41 With few exceptions, such as *Phdr.* 228d–e, *Prt.* 339e–347a and *Phd.* 95a–100a. Nonetheless, in all those texts Socrates takes a critical attitude toward the books he is reading, which does not support Xenophon’s image of Socrates as book-collector. See O’Connor 2015, 81–2.

42 On Barlaam, see Trizio 2017.

the early Palaeologan renaissance.⁴³ However, Barlaam fell into disgrace as quickly as he rose to prominence. In fact, in the 1330s he waged a war against the Athonite monk Gregory Palamas over monastic prayer technique and the nature of deification.⁴⁴ The whole controversy ended in 1341, when Barlaam was officially condemned in a synod. He then left Byzantium and moved back to the West, to Avignon, where for a short period he taught Greek to Petrarch (1304–1374).

Throughout his work Barlaam displays a distinctive attraction to Socrates and Socratic ignorance. Not only does Barlaam incorporate in his own works a vast array of Platonic passages on Socratic ignorance, but he also considered himself a Byzantine Socrates. An example is found in a letter written to one of his opponents a few years before his condemnation of 1341. Here a disenchanted Barlaam displays a full awareness of his upcoming condemnation. Readers can clearly perceive the author's discouragement at losing political support and at being marginalized by the rest of the Byzantine *intelligentsia* in his quest for truth. In fact, this letter begins with a series of excerpts from Plato's *Apology* (206b–23c1), where we learn that the Oracle of Delphi had proclaimed Socrates the wisest of all Greeks. Barlaam diligently reference the *Apology* and explains that, since Socrates was puzzled by the response of the Oracle, he insisted on questioning others who had a reputation for wisdom, and concluded that he was wiser than those people, for unlike them he did not claim to know what he did not know. Because of this, continues Barlaam, a growing hostility towards Socrates rose in his fellow-citizens, to such an extent that he was slandered, charged with impiety, and put to death (*Ep.* v, 378.1–380.30). At the end of this summary of Plato's text, Barlaam surprises the readers by proclaiming himself a Byzantine Socrates, a troublesome philosopher who, because of his unbiased quest for truth, is unjustly slandered and targeted by his enemies (380.31–39).

Barlaam was not known for being modest. His main opponent, Gregory Palamas, repeatedly charged him with being arrogant. His comparing himself with the fate of such an authority as Socrates might be regarded as a characteristic exaggeration. To do so would not, however, do justice to Barlaam's systematic and consistent endorsement of Socratic ignorance. In fact, Barlaam charges his opponents with the most grievous form of ignorance mentioned by Socrates, namely that of those who are unaware of their ignorance, whereas, following Socrates, he proclaims himself a virtuous ignorant in that he is at least aware of his own ignorance (*Ep.* v, 378.13–19; v.12–13, 384.85–101). In the context of his conflict with Palamas and the monastic entourage at Mount

43 Cf. Fryde 2000, 91–102, 183–212, 337–356.

44 Cf. Rigo 1989 and Fyris 2005.

Athos, this strategy aimed at a twofold goal: attacking his opponents as uncouth and ignorant because of their disdain for secular learning; and presenting himself as the only one who knows that true assimilation to God, which he describes in Platonic terms (e.g., *Tht.* 176b–c, *Phd.* 81a–84b, *Ti.* 41d–47c, 90a–d, etc.), can occur only through recognizing one's own ignorance. Accordingly, everywhere in his works, both the extant ones and those which have been transmitted indirectly, Barlaam argues in favor of the need for purification from ignorance and false opinions in a way strongly reminiscent of Socrates' strategy in the Platonic *Alcibiades* and of the late antique commentaries written on this work.⁴⁵ In what follows I shall account for Barlaam's peculiar strategy in more detail.

As Barlaam and his opponents debated over the nature of deification, the process that leads men to become God-like, it is telling that Barlaam adopted Plato's assimilation to God as an alternative to the Christian approach of his opponents. Accordingly, Barlaam endorses the Socratic discourse on ignorance as a basis for his own treatment of the topic at hand. In particular, he put strong emphasis on the need to get rid of false opinions. For example, between 1334 and 1335 Barlaam participated in a dispute with Latin theologians over the procession of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁶ In one of the texts he composed for this occasion, he begged God to free him from false opinions and ignorance (*Prayer* 492.12–13 Fyrigos). Elsewhere, he dismissed the deification as taught by his opponents as inadequate for attaining purification from ignorance and false opinions (*Ep.* 111, 346.559–568). Finally, in another letter to one of his opponents, Barlaam maintains—in a truly Platonic fashion—that the link with the body is detrimental to the soul. In fact,

Because of such union [the divine part of our soul] gets filled with ignorance, with countless false opinions, with forgetfulness and deceit.

BARLAAM OF CALABRIA *Ep.* IV, 372.16–18

This text is particularly important in that it demonstrates that, to a certain extent, Barlaam read Socrates' discourse on ignorance through the lens of the Neoplatonists. In fact, this text is a quotation from Proclus' commentary on the *Alcibiades* (Procl. *In Alc.* 224.1–4). This is not surprising, if one remembers that it was customary for Byzantine scholars to read Plato through Proclus' commentaries, as if Proclus exemplified authentic Platonism.⁴⁷ Barlaam's

⁴⁵ On this, see Trizio 2011, 109–16.

⁴⁶ On this topic, see Siecinski 2010.

⁴⁷ As shown by Menchelli 2010 and 2013, the Byzantine tendency to read Plato through Proclus is even reflected in the text-tradition of their respective works. In fact, the

endorsement of the Neoplatonic Socrates is also evident in his letter where he compares himself to Socrates. While excerpting from the *Apology*, he also adds that his opponents were affected by “double ignorance.” (*Ep.* v, 378.13–16). With the exception of *Laws* 863b–d, this expression mostly occurs in late Neoplatonism for describing the state of those who are unaware of their own ignorance. Proclus’ commentary on the *Alcibiades*, for instance, makes extensive use of this expression.⁴⁸

As a matter of fact, Barlaam’s acceptance of the Neoplatonic Socrates and, to be more precise, of Proclus’ hermeneutics of Socrates’ argumentative strategies, suggests that, while building his own discourse on ignorance upon the Socratic one, Barlaam also accepts the Platonic and Neoplatonic assumptions in matters of epistemology and ontology. For Barlaam, just as for Proclus, in order to become God-like one must go through several levels of purification of the soul, starting from purification from ignorance and false opinions.⁴⁹ And yet, any time Barlaam speaks of himself and his vicissitudes in his clash with the Byzantine monks of the time, he leaves the Neoplatonic Socrates behind the scenes and stages the more authentic features of Socrates’ character: Socrates the truth seeker who interrogates those claiming to possess wisdom on a given topic. That is why he accounts for his intellectual integrity in a Socratic manner:

And any time I notice others who share my same interests, I approach them, when possible, and ask and question them on these very subjects, in such a way as to have a clear sight from their answers of the thoughts and dispositions of their souls with respect to that which I investigate. By comparing their views with mine, it will be immediately clear which of these are to be regarded as the truest ones.

BARLAAM OF CALABRIA *Ep.* v, 95–101 Fyrigos

Conclusions

In this chapter I pointed out that that in late Byzantium Socrates and Socratism were subject to an important process of appropriation that does not simply repeat earlier efforts. Metochites’ approach to Socrates lies between literary criticism and philosophy properly so called. Metochites incorporates Socratic

Platonic dialogues are often accompanied in manuscripts by the corresponding Proclan commentary. On Proclus in Byzantium, see Benakis 1987 and Trizio 2014.

48 Cf., e.g., Procl. *In Alc.* 190,16–191,4; 201,5–9; 293,14–20.

49 See Trizio 2011.

irony within his more general discourse on style in prose, but he also accepts, in a way that may not derive directly from the skeptics, Socrates' negative dogmatism as a necessary attitude for human beings when facing the relentless flux of events. Barlaam of Calabria went even further than this in reviving Socratism in his controversy with the most radical among the Orthodox monks of his time. When reading Barlaam's *Letters*, one gets the impression that the Byzantine Barlaam felt like Socrates, unjustly slandered and despised by his fellow-citizens for his search for truth. Barlaam not only produces a parallel between his condition and that of Socrates; he also considers himself the Socrates of his time, and endorses for perhaps the first time since late antiquity the Socratic agenda as a valid method of inquiry even into topics, including knowledge of God, that his opponents considered specifically Christian ones.

All in all, Theodore Metochites and Barlaam of Calabria exemplify the two tendencies in the Byzantine appropriation of Socrates. On the one hand, several Byzantine scholars incorporate passages from the Platonic corpus in their works in order to display their social prestige. In this regard, referring to Socrates is the hallmark of high-class Byzantine literature seeking a linguistic code to affirm its status. On the other hand, scholars of Byzantium went further in appropriating Socrates by impersonating this historical and literary figure in the intellectual controversies in which they were embroiled. And so the Byzantine Socrates reveals all his faces: the oppressed intellectual, the skeptical philosopher, the passionate inquirer, and the anti-establishment figure. Whereas Byzantine intellectuals simultaneously considered one or more of these faces through the lens of Christianity, we may be confident that Socrates attracted and even seduced the Byzantine readers in a way that vastly transcends their religious concerns.

Abbreviations

Arethas of Caesaria

Scripta minora *Arethae archiepiscopi Caesariensis scripta minora*

Barlaam of Calabria

Epp. *Dalla controversia palamitica alla polemica esicastica (con un'edizione delle epistole greche di Barlaam)*

Precatio *Barlaam Calabro Opere contro i Latini*

Eustratios of Nicaea

In EN *Eustratii et Michaelis et anonyma in ethica Nicomachea commentaria*

Demetrios Kydones

Epp. *Démétrius Cydonès, Correspondance*

John Kinnamos

Hist. Ioannis Cinnami epitome rerum ab Ioanne et Alexio Comnenis

John Tzetzes

Hist. Ioannis Tzetzae Historiae

Ex. In Hom. Il. Der unbekannte Teil der Ilias-Exegesis des Ioannes Tzetzes

Maximus of Tyre

Diss. Maximus Tyrius Dissertationes

Michael Choniates

Epp. Epistulae

Michael Cynnamus

Historia Ioannis Cinnami epitome rerum ab Ioanne et Alexio Comnenis

Michael Gabras

Epp. Die Briefe des Michael Gabras

Michael Psellos

Or. min. Michaelis Pselli Oratoria Minora

Nicephorus Gregoras

Epp. Nicephori Gregorae Epistulae

Theodore Metochites

Sem. Gnom. Semeioseis gnomikai

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PART 5

Early Modern Europe



Manetti's Socrates and the Socrateses of Antiquity

James Hankins

Towards the middle of his *Life of Socrates* (c. 1440), the first biography of the great philosopher written since antiquity, Giannozzo Manetti roundly states that the opinions attributed to Socrates in the books of Plato were genuine, and that furthermore they were shared by Plato too:

Thus no written records of his teaching have come down to us, unless one wishes to call Plato's books records of his master Socrates. For in almost all of them, when he presents Socrates speaking, one may say with precise truth that the ideas attributed to Socrates in the dialogues of Plato were his and, vice versa, that Plato's views are those spoken by the mouth of Socrates.¹

Vita Socratis §30

The remark is one that a modern classical scholar could not but regard as staggeringly naïve, given the shelves full of books that have been written over the last two centuries attempting to recover the historical Socrates and, in particular, to distinguish his teaching from that of Plato. Recent students of Socrates, indeed, tend to despair of finding the “real” Socrates behind the surviving sources and prefer to speak instead of the images of Socrates projected by particular writers, schools and traditions. Hence we have the Aristophanic Socrates, a natural philosopher, sophist and free thinker; the pedestrian teacher of conventional morality portrayed by Xenophon; the logic-chopping soul-doctor of Plato; the skeptical Socrates of the Hellenistic Academy; Cicero's Socrates, the fountainhead of all Greek philosophical schools; the morally ambivalent Socrates of the early Christians; and the sublime metaphysical Socrates of the Neoplatonists. But despite his remark quoted above, the image of Socrates presented to us by Manetti, deeply colored though it is by the

¹ This and all translations from Baldassarri and Bagemihl 2003. The present chapter was first published in *Dignitas et excellentia hominis: Atti del convegno internazionale di studi su Giannozzo Manetti* (Georgetown University-Kent State University: Fiesole-Firenze, 18–20 giugno 2007), Stefano Ugo Baldassari (ed.), Firenze: Le Lettere, 2008, 203–19; permission to republish comes from the author, the editor, and the publisher.

Platonic Socrates, nevertheless presents an image of him that is in the end quite distinct from Plato's, both in life and in doctrine. Manetti's biography at first sight appears to be a congeries of quotation and anecdote of varying ideological provenance; indeed there is very little in the biography that is not quoted or paraphrased from some identifiable source. The argument of this chapter is that the seemingly random collection of material is in fact carefully curated to achieve a particular purpose; it achieves its effect pointillistically by the arrangement and juxtaposition of facts, quotations and anecdotes. Manetti selected material from among the numerous "Socrateses" preserved in ancient sources so as to produce a new image of Socrates that is intended to make him into an authority for and an *exemplum* of the humanist cultural project. Manetti's Socrates represents the embodiment of what early humanism thought a philosopher should be and carries on the humanist critique of contemporary school philosophy pioneered by Petrarch and continued by Salutati and Manetti's teacher, Leonardo Bruni.²

Manetti was fortunate in having access to a wider range of sources for the life and teaching of Socrates than any previous scholar in Latin Christendom. Analysis of the *Vita Socratis* discloses that he made use of *testimonia* in Aristotle, Cicero, Valerius Maximus, Seneca, Aulus Gellius, Apuleius, Augustine and Jerome. All of these works, to be sure, might have been used by a medieval scholar with an exceptional library at his disposal.³ But Manetti also benefitted from a number of key sources that only became known in the Latin West as a result of the Hellenic revival sparked by Manuel Chrysoloras in the decades after 1400. Thus Manetti gained access to Plato's *Phaedo*, *Crito*, *Apology*, *Gorgias*, and Alcibiades' speech from the *Symposium*,⁴ translated by his teacher, Leonardo Bruni; Xenophon's *Apology of Socrates*, also translated by Bruni;⁵ and—most important of all—the lives of Socrates, his teachers and his

2 On the humanist view of what philosophy should be, see Hankins 2007a. Fuller details on the cultural context of Manetti's Socrates may be found in Hankins 2007b.

3 The twelfth-century translations of the *Meno* and *Phaedo* by Henricus Aristippus were literal to the point of unintelligibility and in any case enjoyed extremely limited circulation (though Petrarch and Salutati had copies of the *Phaedo* version). The only work of Plato widely studied in the Middle Ages was the first third of the *Timaeus*, which had been translated into Latin in the fourth century by Calcidius. See Hankins 2003–2004, 193–142.

4 A Latin text and English translation of the latter is in Hankins 2007b, 196–203. There are modern editions of Bruni's two versions of the *Crito* in Berti and Carosini 1983.

5 The least ambiguous evidence that Manetti read Bruni's translation of Xenophon's *Apology* comes at §20, where Manetti says "By dying in this way Socrates avoided the innumerable sufferings of human life" (*Atque, ita moriens, multiplices humanae vitae molestias evitaret*), which echoes Xen. *Ap.* 6 and 32, and is not paralleled by any passage in Plato or Diogenes

disciples that make up book 2 of Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Philosophers*, translated into Latin in 1431 by the Camaldolese monk, Ambrogio Traversari. Manetti remained ignorant, sadly, of other key Greek sources such as the plays of Aristophanes, the rest of the Platonic dialogues and the numerous testimonia in the Greek Church Fathers, Lucian, Dio Chrysostom, Plutarch's *Moralia*, Athenaeus, Maximus of Tyre and, most regrettably, three of the four "Socratic" works of Xenophon. Though Bessarion translated the *Memorabilia* in 1442, two years after the initial dedication of Manetti's *Socrates* to Nuño de Guzmán but a decade before the work was rededicated to King Alfonso of Aragon and Naples,⁶ it seems that Manetti did not know the version, or if he did, he chose not to add new material from it to his biography after its initial publication. And there is no evidence in the *Vita* that he knew either Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* or his *Symposium*.⁷ Nevertheless, Manetti's industry in gathering together relevant texts remains impressive.

It cannot be said, however, that the resulting composition was a masterpiece of the biographical genre, or that Manetti fully succeeded in digesting his sources and producing a coherent picture of the great Athenian philosopher. As stated above, at first sight the biography appears to be an ill-assorted patchwork of quotations and paraphrases from diverse sources, arranged roughly by topics but with frequent digressions, repetitions and awkward transitions. It cannot be compared in clarity of presentation or critical acumen with Bruni's biographies of Cicero, Aristotle, Dante, and Petrarch. But there are some resemblances in method. Bruni took Plutarch's life of Cicero as the core of his own biography, but then integrated new material, mostly from Cicero's own works, and produced a fresh assessment of the Roman orator's role in Roman political life and his literary merit.⁸ Manetti likewise uses material from Diogenes Laertius as the core of his own biography, often quoting from or paraphrasing Traversari's translation, but he reorders Diogenes' material and integrates testimonia from his other sources, while cutting out many of the witty sayings and maxims attributed to Socrates as well as much titillating

Laertius. In the account of Socrates' death, Manetti generally follows Plato's rather than Xenophon's *Apology*.

6 Pade 2007, 1.337 n. 993, makes the interesting point that Alfonso of Aragon was pleased to be associated with Socrates (and Seneca), and that Panormita's anecdotal biography of the king, *De dictis et factis Alfonsi regis*, mirrored the fifteenth-century title of Xenophon's *Memorabilia: De dictis et factis Socratis*.

7 See Hankins and Palmer 2008, 6–7, for the Renaissance recovery of the sources for Socrates' life and teaching.

8 Ianziti 2002.

gossip and merely antiquarian detail. He vastly expands Diogenes' brief treatments of Socrates' pedagogy, his *daimonion*, and the account of the trial and death of Socrates, where he draws directly on Apuleius' *De deo Socratis* and on Bruni's translations. Moreover, in the case of some anecdotes he substitutes a version from another source in place of the version found in Diogenes. For example, in telling the story of how Socrates' student Aeschines offered himself to Socrates, Manetti prefers the version in Seneca's *De beneficiis* to the one in Diogenes, surely because it better highlights Socrates' devotion to the moral improvement of his disciples:

Cum sibi dixisset Aeschines, "Pauper sum, et aliud habeo nihil: me ipsum autem tibi do." "An vero tu," inquit, "non animadvertis quam mihi maxime tradis?"

DIOGENES LAERTIUS 2.34, tr. TRAVERSARI (Venice, 1475)

When Aeschines said, "Poor as I am, I have nothing else to give; but I offer you myself," Socrates replied, "But don't you feel that you are offering me the greatest gift of all?"

tr. MENSCH

Socrati cum multa pro suis quisque facultatibus offerrent, Aeschines, pauper auditor: "Nihil," inquit, "dignum te, quod dare tibi possim, invenio et hoc uno modo pauperem esse me sentio. Itaque dono tibi, quod unum habeo, me ipsum. Hoc munus rogo, qualecumque est, boni consulas cogitesque alios, cum multum tibi darent, plus sibi reliquisse." Cui Socrates: "Quidni tu," inquit, "magnum munus mihi dederis, nisi forte te parvo aestimas? Habebo itaque curae, ut te meliorem tibi reddam, quam accepi."

SENECA, *De beneficiis* 1.8.1

Once, when many gifts were being presented to Socrates by his pupils, each one bringing according to his means, Aeschines, who was poor, said to him: "Nothing that I am able to give to you do I find worthy of you, and only in this way do I discover that I am a poor man. And so I give to you the only thing that I possess—myself. This gift, such as it is, I beg you to take in good part, and bear in mind that the others, though they gave to you much, have left more for themselves." "And how," said Socrates, "could it have been anything but a great gift—unless maybe you set small value upon yourself? And so I shall make it my care to return you to yourself a better man than when I received you."

tr. BASORE

Unde Aeschines, unus ex discipulis, cum ita pauper esset ut ob paupertatem neque pecuniam neque munera dare posset, "Nihil", inquit, "te dignum invenio quod tibi donare valeam, in quo uno me pauperem et inopem esse recognosco. Itaque me ipsum, quo nihil carius habeo, tibi do". Cui Socrates humanissime simul atque liberalissime respondisse fertur: "Magnum mihi munus dedisti. Conabor igitur ut meliorem te tibi reddam quam acceperim."

MANETTI, *Vita Socratis* §24

Hence Aeschines, one of his disciples, being poor and unable to furnish either money or gifts, said: "I find I have no worthy gift to give you, and I recognize that in this one respect I am poor and resourceless. So I give you myself, having nothing more valuable." To this Socrates answered with great kindness and liberality: "You give me a great gift indeed. I shall try to give you back to yourself in a better state than I received you."

In general, Manetti's account differs from Diogenes' in being far more high-minded in tone and panegyric in purpose. His life of Socrates is in effect a *laudatio Socratis*: what gives it coherence above all is his presentation of Socrates as an exemplar of the moral and intellectual virtues. The emphasis on Socrates' virtues provides Manetti with a principle of selection, while his arrangement of materials follows a broadly chronological sequence, as can be seen from the following analysis of topics:

Outline of Manetti's *Vita Socratis*

- 1–13 Preface to King Alfonso of Aragon
- 13–14 Socrates' place of birth, parentage, dates
- 14–15 His natural gifts, education and military service
- 16–17 His turn to ethics and his career as a moral philosopher
- 18–20 His studies of dialectic, music, natural philosophy
- 20–21 The oracle of Apollo's judgment about Socrates
- 22–26 His teaching and its influence on Greek philosophy
- 27–28 His intellectual gifts
- 29–30 His profession of ignorance and his irony
- 30 Records of Socrates' life and thought
- 31 Socrates as a living oracle
- 32–36 Physical appearance, domestic habits and marriages
- 37–38 Public life; his patience
- 39–42 His other virtues: justice, temperance, gentleness

- 43–44 His physical toughness and plain living
- 45–50 Socrates' tutelary daimon
- 51–55 The trial and condemnation of Socrates; his courage
- 56–61 Imprisonment and death
- 62 Posthumous vindication
- 63 Other persons of the same name

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Manetti's praise of Socrates' virtues pursues, implicitly, two broad lines of argument. The first is that Socrates perfectly exemplifies the way of life advocated by civic humanists like Salutati, Bruni, Poggio, and Manetti himself.⁹ Socrates was a public-spirited citizen who fought for Athens as an exceptionally brave soldier and who held offices and magistracies rarely but with distinction. He could not be corrupted by money or honors. He dressed simply and lived frugally. He had so much respect for the laws of his city that he refused an easy escape from prison, even though he had been unjustly condemned to death, because to break the laws would be *factum turpe quoddam et scelestum facinum*. He married and raised a family. He devoted his life to teaching good moral behavior to young Athenians, a service he performed *gratis*. His studies comprehended a wide range of subjects, including letters, logic and natural philosophy. Nor was he ignorant of the softer arts, for he wrote poetry, played the lyre, and engaged in bodily exercise, including dancing (Manetti uses Socrates' example as an excuse to argue at length for the seemliness and utility of each of these arts). But though he had the skills of a courtier he rarely traveled, refused offers to join the courts of kings and potentates, and preferred life as a citizen of a powerful, free and cultured city (§23).

He stood outside and above class and party politics and acted as the moral censor of Athens. He faced down the recklessness of the mob with great courage, but was also ready to speak truth to powerful men. In §38, Manetti juxtaposes two anecdotes from Diogenes Laertius and Valerius Maximus to make this point. In the first, Socrates resists pressure from "thirty extremely powerful men" (i.e., the oligarchy of the Thirty, which ruled Athens in 404/3 BCE) and voted to acquit Leon of Salamis, whom they were trying to destroy. Although Manetti is paraphrasing Diogenes Laertius (2.24) at this point, he chooses to leave out Diogenes' statement that Socrates was *demokratikos*.¹⁰ The second

⁹ On civic humanism, see Hankins 2000.

¹⁰ Traversari translates: *Erat autem constantis animi invictaeque sententiae et imprimis popularis dominationis studiosus*.

anecdote, from Valerius Maximus (3.8 ext. 3), tells how Socrates used his office as President of the Assembly to resist a mob that was raging to commit judicial murder against ten generals who had in truth deserved well of the state. So Socrates in Manetti's telling was a partisan of neither the oligarchs nor the *demos*. He was a kind of moral censor who was allowed by right to challenge the *mores* of his fellow citizens. Manetti is careful to say, quoting Cicero, that Socrates had the standing to correct his fellow citizens because of his own superhuman virtues, but most people would not enjoy the same right to speak against the *mores* and established customs of their city (§23).

Florentine civic humanists, like all humanists, placed great emphasis on the need to acquire eloquence, but this aspect of Socrates presents Manetti with a challenge in assimilating Socrates to the program of humanism. He insists (§18) that Socrates was "keen and ready of speech" (*acer ... et promptus ad dicendum*) and skilled in the art of discussion (*ars disserendi, quam Graeci "dialecticen" appellant*), but he stops short of claiming that the Athenian was a polished or elegant orator. He was less a fine speaker than an upright teacher (§30). In his life of Aristotle (1429), Bruni had had no difficulty in arguing for the eloquence of Aristotle, and Guarino had made similar claims about Plato in his 1430 biography,¹¹ but Manetti's sources were less cooperative. Indeed, he had to contend with Cicero's positive statement that Socrates had been condemned "for the sole fault of rhetorical ignorance" (*nullam aliam ob culpam nisi propter dicendi inscientiam*, §54, quoting Cic. *De or.* 1.54.231–3).

Manetti responded by discussing at length (§§53–6) the story, preserved in several sources, of how the professional orator Lysias had offered Socrates an "elegant and effective" speech to give at his trial but had been refused. The story gives Manetti a chance to explain that Socrates refused to use Lysias' speech because it projected a dishonorable persona, that of a man who was humble and pleading before his judges, rather than that of an innocent and courageous man. Socrates failed to hire an advocate or employ himself the arts of rhetoric not because of his "inability to speak" (*imperitia sermonis*) but because of his "contempt for death" (*contemptus mortis*, §59). The correct rhetorical strategy to win his case would have required him to act dishonorably and deny the value of his previous life. In other words, Socrates' failure to vindicate himself before his judges was not a rhetorical failure but a moral victory. Manetti, himself a famous orator, thus sees Socrates' trial as a special rhetorical situation where losing the case is in reality to win it. It does not entitle us to say that Socrates was ignorant of rhetoric, or (as Plato argued in the *Gorgias*) that there was a

11 For Bruni's *Life of Aristotle*, see Griffiths, Hankins, and Thompson 1987, 262–74; for Guarino's *Life of Plato*, see Hankins 2003–2004, 2.67–72.

deep contradiction between the practice of rhetoric and the practice of the philosophical life. To elaborate on the latter contrast would have threatened the whole humanistic project, but Manetti (like Cicero and most humanists) prefers not to regard the traditional rivalry of philosophy and rhetoric as a deep and irreconcilable rift between two forms of personal formation. Manetti's wider message is that the true philosopher is a man of deep literary culture, devoted to his city-state, who practices and teaches virtue, embodies wisdom in his life, and uses eloquence as an instrument of virtue and wisdom.

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Manetti's second broad line of argument in his biography aims to prove that Socrates' conduct and beliefs, and by implication true philosophy, were compatible with the teachings of Christianity. Here, as he must have known, his judgment was in direct conflict with that of the ancient Church Fathers. The Fathers took a distinctly negative view of Socrates—in fact they remain today the primary conduit for our knowledge of the ancient pagan anti-Socratic tradition. To be sure, Socrates is sometimes used as a positive example when he is being exploited instrumentally for apologetic purposes: how could the pagans persecute Christians, the early Fathers asked, when their own hero Socrates had also been a monotheist who had been unjustly condemned for rejecting the traditional gods? But more typically Socrates was treated as a corrupt representative of the Greek philosophical tradition, with which ancient Christians felt themselves to be in rivalry. Denigrating the father of philosophy was thus a strategy to establish the moral superiority of the Christian religion. So Socrates was mocked as a pagan wise man who could not control his own lust and anger (Cyril of Alexandria and Theodoret), as a promiscuous homosexual and pedophile (Clement of Rome, Tertullian, Cyril), as a self-confessed ignoramus (Ps.-Justin, Lactantius, and Jerome), as a charlatan and a sophist (the emperor Constantine I), and as a demon-worshipper (Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Origen and Cyprian).¹² For obvious reasons Manetti chose not to engage in any explicit way the Church Fathers' abuse and mockery of Socrates, but he provides emollients to soothe the conscience of any reader worried about the suitability of Socrates as a moral model for Christians. Following Bruni (and making use of Bruni's bowdlerized version of the speech of Alcibiades in the Symposium),¹³ Manetti rejects out of hand any suggestion that Socrates might have yielded to physical lust for young men like Alcibiades (§§24, 47); he tells

12 See Frede 2006 and Edwards 2007.

13 See Hankins 1990, 1.80–1; 2007b, 187 and 190.

Cicero's well-known anecdote about Socrates and the physiognomist Zopyrus (§44) to forestall any insinuations that Socrates' interest in young men might have had any other motive than concern for their moral welfare. Diogenes Laertius' gossipy suggestion (2.19) that Socrates had been the *paidika* or boy lover of his teacher Archelaus is of course suppressed, as is his remark, passed with a note of surprise, that "there were those who said [Socrates] rejected Alcibiades' extraordinary good looks" (2.31).¹⁴ Whereas Jerome had used as arguments against marriage the comical stories of Socrates' humiliation at the hands of his wives,¹⁵ Manetti recycles Jerome's anecdotes to illustrate Socrates' supreme virtue of patience (§§33–6). In general, ancient praise of Socrates for his *enkrateia* or self-control in Manetti's hands becomes praise of him for the Christian virtue of patience, just as Manetti turns Socrates' professions of ignorance into the Christian virtue of humility (§29: *in hac tam humili nihil sciendi professione*).

Manetti had a greater hermeneutical challenge in dealing with the story of Socrates' *daimonion*, the attendant spirit who warned Socrates at key moments of his life against taking some course of action. The difficulty was not simply that there are numerous passages in the Church Fathers jeering at Socrates' "demon" and insinuating that the fountainhead of Greek philosophy was possessed by an evil demon. The issue was even more acute, in that St. Augustine, the chief doctor of the Western Church, had spent much of Books 8–10 of the *City of God* arguing against the demonology of the Platonists, using Apuleius' *De deo Socratis* as his point of departure—the very text Manetti uses as his main source in the long discussion (§§45–50) of Socrates' attendant spirit. Augustine argues that demons are not intermediate essences in the Chain of Being between the gods and men, as the Platonists had argued. Only Christ can be a true intermediary between God and man. Following the Biblical view of demons, Augustine denied that there were good demons. For him, as for the Church Fathers generally, all demons were by definition evil (*De civ. D.* 9.19), inferior in metaphysical dignity to mankind, and the pagan gods held the same cosmic rank as the demons of the Bible. The position held by the gods in the Chain of Being, according to the Platonists, for Augustine was reserved for the angels. In his discussion of Apuleius' book, Augustine leaves open the possibility that Socrates' *daimonion* might have belonged to a genus of *numina* different from that of the demons:

14 Traversari simply transliterates the Greek word *paidika*, and translates the sentence about Alcibiades as *Sunt qui dicant illum Alcibiadis eximiam formam aspernatum*.

15 *Adv. Iovinian.* 1.48 (= Migne, *PL* 23: 278).

So either Apuleius is mistaken and it is not to this class of supernatural beings that Socrates' familiar spirit belongs ... or else Socrates is not to be congratulated on his friendship with a demon, which so embarrassed even Apuleius that he gave his book the title *On the God of Socrates*, although to conform with his discussion, in which he so painstakingly and thoroughly distinguishes gods from demons, he should have called it not *On the God*, but *On the Demon of Socrates*. But he preferred to use this expression in the body of his argument rather than in the title of the book.¹⁶

AUGUST. *De civ. D.* 8.14, tr. MCCracken

Manetti seizes on this possibility and asserts positively, as Augustine had not, that Socrates' *daimonion* was a good angel.¹⁷ According to a long-established theological tradition in the Church, all men had a good angel to act as their guardian, guide and educator, and a bad angel to test their faith.¹⁸ Manetti asserts that this was the case with Socrates, with the difference that Socrates, "owing to his unique and conspicuous moral excellence," always obeyed his good angel, never his bad (§46).

This was an extraordinary assertion of the attainability of human moral excellence in the absence of Christian grace, dubious in its theological orthodoxy; and *prima facie* one might conjecture that Manetti believed Socrates to have access, via his *daimonion*, to non-human sources of wisdom denied to other men *qua* men. There are a few statements in the biography that

16 *Aut ergo fallitur Apuleius et non ex isto genere numinum habuit amicum Socrates ... aut non est Socrati amicitia daemonis gratulanda. De qua usque adeo et ipse Apuleius erubuit, ut De deo Socratis praenotaret librum, quem secundum suam disputationem, qua deos a daemonibus tam diligenter copioseque discernit, non appellare de deo, sed de daemone Socratis debuit. Maluit autem hoc in ipsa disputatione quam in titulo libri ponere.*

17 It is this that no doubt accounts for Manetti's view of the *daimonion* as offering generalized moral counsel and guidance (like the *daimonion* in Xenophon's Socratic works) as opposed to the Platonic view of the *daimonion* who offers only "intuitive certainty concerning the non-rectitude of a quite particular action [Socrates] was contemplating" (Long 2006, 67). For Xenophon's interpretation of the *daimonion*, see Dorion 2006, 96; Gera 2007, 38. Slightly later, Manetti becomes evasive on the subject of the *daimonion*'s cosmic rank: "[Socrates] recognized this good angel or daimon or god—for it is variously referred to by many writers, as Augustine attests" (*Hunc ergo bonum sive angelum sive daemonem sive deum [sic enim varie, ut tradit Augustinus, a plerisque appellatur]*, §48).

18 See Peter Lombard, *Sentences* 2.11.1. Manetti reasserts this doctrine, using Socrates as an example of its application to non-Christian figures, in his *De dignitate et excellentia hominis* 3.43.

might lend themselves to this interpretation.¹⁹ But Manetti explicitly closes off the possibility that the *daimonion* is a vehicle of moral knowledge. Following Apuleius (*De deo Soc.* 17.157–8; cf. Xen. *Ap.* 12–13), the Florentine distinguishes sharply between Socrates' natural wisdom, which was sufficient for moral guidance, and the guidance of the *daimonion*, who provided prophetic knowledge of the future (*Eodem modo Socrates agebat; nam ubi consilio, propria sapientia; ubi vero praesagia, vi daemonis utebatur*, §49). Socrates' wisdom remains natural, not supernatural, in its sources; it is the result of his virtue and intellect, not of some special grace.

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It is when we come to the content of Socrates' wisdom, his actual teachings, that Manetti's Socrates least resembles the Platonic and Stoic Socrateses and most resembles the skeptical and Xenophontic ones. Manetti's account of Socrates' moral teaching is likely to surprise and disappoint the modern reader, for the Florentine is completely silent about the doctrines associated with Socratic moral philosophy that modern scholars consider most important and characteristic. Manetti does not for instance mention the Socratic teachings

- 1) that no one does wrong willingly: that if we had true knowledge of virtue, we would always behave virtuously;
- 2) that all virtue is one: that striving for the virtues is a unified process, related in various ways to a single search for wisdom and rationality in one's behavior patterns, and that the virtues cannot conflict with each other;
- 3) that self-mastery is the foundation of virtue, and virtue is both a necessary and sufficient condition for happiness; that virtue is to the soul as health is to the body; and that this kind of virtue cannot be taught;²⁰
- 4) that the unexamined life is not worth living; it is the only way to root out the errors that have damaged one's soul, errors that have their origin in false beliefs inherited from traditional religion and corrupt social values;
- 5) that only the wise man is truly free; a life not regulated by reason is a life of slavery to the passions and appetites;

19 For instance, the statement at §28 that the Socratic paradoxes were thought by others to be divinely inspired, or the statement at §32 that he was "an earthly oracle of human wisdom" whose utterances were thought to be divine even by philosophers.

20 At §40, Manetti does remark, without further discussion, that Socrates "thought the blessed life consisted in virtue alone (*beatam vitam una virtute contineri prorsus existimabat*).

- 6) that the correct method in moral philosophy is to examine the internal consistency of one's beliefs through a process of question-and-answer; that false beliefs have to be rooted out by use of the *elenchus*; and that exchanging long speeches—*makrologia* as the practice is called in the *Gorgias* (449b, 461a–462b)—does not lead to true knowledge.

All of these doctrines are well attested in sources demonstrably known to Manetti, so his decision to omit them must in some sense be intentional. Given what has already been said, we can guess some of the reasons. The humanists themselves, from the time of Petrarch onwards, claimed that virtue could be learned by reading classical texts, and that ancient eloquence and oratory were vital instruments for the spread of virtue throughout the ruling classes and down the social pyramid. So they would not have been sympathetic to Socrates' method, which regularly involved humiliation of an opponent. In their own dialogues they almost always imitated Ciceronian *makrologia* and not the Socratic dialogue as illustrated in the early works of Plato.²¹ Manetti surely also wanted to avoid obvious conflicts with Christian assumptions about human nature and the human need for salvation by God. The Pauline and Augustinian versions of Christianity in particular emphasized the weakness of the human intellect and the inability of human virtue to achieve on its own the standards set by God for man. Despite Manetti's claims for Socrates' nearly superhuman virtue, to explicate Socrates' teachings in detail, which emphasize the power of natural human reason to educe virtue, wisdom and happiness, would probably have invited too explicit a comparison with settled Christian dogmas.

Nevertheless, Manetti does discuss a few of Socrates' teachings and intellectual commitments. He spends the most space discussing Socrates' 'ethical turn': the story preserved in numerous sources that after his early studies with Anaxagoras and Archelaus of natural science (*naturalis historia* Manetti calls it), Socrates abandoned these studies and turned instead to ethics, a subject which he is deemed to have practically invented. Thus, in the much-repeated phrase, he brought philosophy down from the skies and placed it in the cities and even the homes of men. Manetti is fascinated by this story, as Petrarch, Salutati and Bruni had been before him, because it seemed to authorize the aspirations of the early humanists for their own culture. They wanted philosophy to abandon the fruitless obscurities of Aristotelian logic and natural philosophy as taught in the universities and to embrace a

21 The single exception known to the present writer is Raffaele Lippi Brandolini's *De comparatione regni et reipublicae* (c. 1490), for which see Hankins 1996, 132–3. For Bruni's encounter with Socrates' critique of rhetoric in the *Gorgias*, see Hankins 1990, 1.53–8.

more civil philosophy, concerned with behavior and human affairs. That philosophy should be studied by statesmen engaged in the active life, not by contemplatives or by a specialized caste of experts. Echoing Petrarch's *De ignorantia* §107, Manetti faults Aristotle for merely describing virtue rather than making his readers desire it:

Furthermore, although Aristotle gave an excellent treatment of the definitions and distinctions among the soul's virtues, he seems to have offered careful readers nothing to make them desire the virtues more ardently and avoid the vices more earnestly. That is something for which Socrates and Plato among the Greeks, and Cicero and Seneca among our authors, have won praise. Their exhortations have awakened men who were asleep or distracted to an incredible love of virtue and detestation of vice.

Vita Socratis §22

Socrates was superior to Aristotle for the same reason a humanistic education was superior to a scholastic one: the student acquired not merely theoretical knowledge of a discipline, but (in principle at least) a genuine love for virtue and a hatred for vice.

Manetti's explanation for why Socrates embraced the "ethical turn" reflects these convictions. He offers three explanations (§15). The first, from Cicero (*Acad.* 1.4), is that Socrates was skeptical that anything certain or true could be known; this is described as the *vetus opinio* of the Academics. The second explanation, from Diogenes Laertius (11.21), is that Socrates believed *naturalis historia* to be fruitless for *bene beateque vivendum*. The third, which comes from Augustine's *City of God* (8.3), is that Socrates believed that moral philosophy was a *via purgativa* and that moral purification was a necessary prerequisite before ascending to knowledge of the highest and most divine studies. Of these explanations Manetti seems to endorse both the first and the second, though he later (§19) amends the first and states that Socrates had knowledge of the subject matter of natural philosophy (*physica*) but regarded its conclusions as uncertain.

For Manetti this raised the whole problem of Socratic ignorance and what exactly it entailed and how it was related to his skepticism. As a humanist in the Petrarchan mold Manetti preferred that his hero not manifest any skepticism so radical that it would undermine the assumptions of humanist literary education or challenge Christian belief. He therefore links Socrates' professions of ignorance with his habit of irony (which Manetti, following

Cicero, translates as *dissimulatio*).²² In professing his ignorance he is merely adopting an ironic pose, akin to Christian humility, whose goal is to point the contrast with self-proclaimed experts and sophists who in reality lacked any true knowledge (§§19, 29, 30). In fact, as Manetti repeatedly points out, Socrates was being a *maximus ironicus*: he was positively bursting with knowledge of many arts and sciences, and indeed founded the whole science of ethics. Manetti brings the subject to a close by quoting Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* 4.13 1127b): “It is the ironist who boasts the least, as Socrates used to do, who insisted on his total ignorance despite his vast knowledge.”

The other Socratic doctrines are equally instrumentalized to reinforce the portrait of Socrates that Manetti wishes to paint. He mentions that Socrates was “contradicted, mocked and ... despised by Aristotle ... for having defined virtue as knowledge” (§20). But instead of a defense of Socrates’ teaching, Manetti tries to refute Aristotle by reiterating the point that Socrates was himself considered wise and exemplary in his moral behavior by “the consensus of all mankind and the divine oracle of Apollo.” The point is so irrelevant that one might suspect an authorial mishap of some kind. But it seems more likely that Manetti believed that the truth of Socrates’ doctrine could be established by appeal to his authority rather than by argument. Thus the single most important Socratic doctrine is mentioned only as a hook to drag in yet another assertion of Socrates’ wisdom and to hit at the scholastics’ favorite authority, Aristotle. A mention of Socrates’ supposed teaching that there is no distinction between the *honestum* and the *utile* (§17) is cited merely to prove Socrates’ influence on the Stoics.

The only teaching of Socrates that Manetti foregrounds, and indeed labels the *Socraticum decretum*, is the doctrine that it is better to suffer than commit injustice (§39). Manetti mentions this to illustrate Socrates’ deep understanding of the virtue of justice. The Florentine no doubt learned of this doctrine from Bruni’s translation of the *Gorgias*, and Bruni had also highlighted the doctrine in the preface to his translation, directed to Pope John XXIII,²³ and later in the preface to his translation of Aristotle’s *Politics*, dedicated to Pope Eugene IV (1437):

Socrates, according to Plato in the book called *Gorgias* [473a], shows that it is worse to inflict than to suffer an injury. And he presses the argument to the point of saying that he has proved by the severest logic that it is far worse to inflict than to suffer an injury. In the same book Socrates

²² On Socratic irony in the Renaissance, see Knox 1989.

²³ Hankins 1990, 1.53–8; see also 2.496–7.

teaches that if someone does us an injury, we should not seek vengeance. [474b–476a; 509c–511a] What kind of teachings, by God, are these? Are they not divine, are they not very similar to Christian perfection?

BRUNI, *Sulla perfetta traduzione* p. 278 (Viti 2004, tr. in GRIFFITHS, HANKINS, THOMPSON 1987, 158)

This is the only Socratic doctrine in the entire biography to which Manetti gives any emphasis, and the reason why is not far to seek. It is this doctrine which best makes the case for considering Socratic wisdom a useful philosophical endorsement of Christ's most difficult admonitions: to love one's enemies and to turn the other cheek rather than resist an evil person. The unique status of the doctrine in his biography also underlines for the modern historian Manetti's decisive rejection of the patristic view of Socrates and its replacement by a new, Renaissance image of Socrates: a civic humanist who is a paragon of conventional virtue, a good citizen and educator who, if not actually a Christian, is nevertheless a figure whom a Christian could admire and imitate.

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Writing Montaigne's Socrates with Diogenes Laertius and Plutarch

Alison Calhoun

Our actions are nothing but a patchwork [...] We are all patchwork, and so shapeless and diverse in composition that each bit, each moment, plays its own game. And there is as much difference between us and ourselves as between us and others.¹

243–4

[A] *Nostre faict, ce ne sont que pieces rapportées [...]* [A] *Nous sommes tous de lopins, et d'une contexture si informe et diverse, que chaque piece, chaque momant, faict son jeu. Et se trouve autant de difference de nous à nous mesmes, que de nous à autrui.*

II.1.336–7

...

He [an author] who would judge them [his subject] in detail and distinctly, bit by bit, would more often hit upon the truth [...]

239–40

[B] *Qui* [an author] *en* [his subject] *jugeroit en destail* [C] *et distinctement piece à piece, [B] rencontreroit plus souvent à dire vray [...]*

II.1.332

∴

¹ All references to the *Essays* are from Montaigne 1965 [2004] and will be cited in parentheses by book number, chapter number, and page number. This edition distinguishes between three layers of passages: [A] passages were written between 1571–80 and published in 1580, [B] passages were written between 1580–88 and published in 1588, and [C] passages were written from 1588–92 and published posthumously in 1595. All English translations of Montaigne's *Essays* are taken from Donald Frame's translation in Montaigne 1958. Hereafter only parenthetical page numbers will be used.

1 Introduction

As a writer aiming to write about himself, Michel de Montaigne (1533–92) believed he got closer to authentic autobiographical narrative when he presented himself as he is, not when he presented an ideal of wholly virtuous behavior. As Montaigne explains from the outset of his *Essays* (1580–95), his self-portrait is not a book he is writing to gain fame and acclaim. On the contrary, he seeks to reconstruct himself in a light that is simple, ordinary, and full of his “defects.” Later, in writing “I am no philosopher” (739) [“[C] *Je ne suis pas philosophe*” (III.9.950)], he tries to certify that he in no way considers himself a “great” or exemplary thinker. The execution of Montaigne’s authenticity, however, is problematized in the *Essays*. We understand his aim to be autobiographical when, in his opening, he writes that his book is solely about himself, and says that he thinks he is “consubstantial” with, of the same substance as, his book: “I am the matter of my book” [*je suis moy-mesmes la matiere de mon livre*].² But within the pages of the *Essays*—as would be common enough among contemporaries’ memoirs—there are relatively few autobiographical “I” narratives about the author.³ Instead, the *Essays* reflect in their literary format the philosophy of life-writing as a genre of ethics: one that multiplies, compares, and therefore complicates rather than prescribes conduct and behavior for living a good life. Montaigne’s indirect approach to writing about himself is therefore not to skirt the topic of Montaigne the person, but rather to find a way to develop a life-writing practice without presenting the author as an exemplar for his readers’ emulation.⁴ This means playing with the focus of his main subject (himself) and venturing into other people’s lives, especially through stories that may seem common, mundane, embarrassing, or shameful.⁵ The significance of this double aim—to capture a person’s life in writing, and to eschew positivism and exemplarity—cannot be underestimated; it is the reason Montaigne continues to fascinate students and scholars of both literature and philosophy. In his *Essays*, Montaigne’s selection of individuals, the comparisons he draws between them, the judgments he passes on their life stories, and the way he thinks through each, together do the

2 In Book 2, Montaigne explicitly makes this theological claim of consubstantiality when he writes “I have no more made my book than my book has made me—a book consubstantial with its author” (504) [*Je n’ay pas plus fait mon livre que mon livre consubstantiel à son auteur*] (2.18.665). For consubstantiality and the *Essay* project, see Regosin 1973.

3 See Calhoun 2008 for comparisons between his project and forms of proto-autobiography.

4 I argue this extensively in my book (Calhoun 2015).

5 Timothy Hampton frames the anti-exemplum in terms of writing against history (e.g., Hampton 1989, 881–2).

work of attempting (*essay*) to attain a more authentic self-portraiture while also querying the way we learn about ethics and acquire models of virtue.

Among the biographical subjects we read about in the *Essays*, philosophers appear the most frequently, and Socrates appears 116 times, more than any other figure. While at first glance, a work that claims to be autobiographical but contains ample narrative about Socrates would seem to present itself as taking a comparative approach to the self, we must remember to what extent Montaigne was trying to avoid models. Each time the essayist praises Socrates, he risks, through his constructed comparison, putting himself on that same pedestal and generating the image of the moral exemplar that would undo the hard work of the essay project. Montaigne's solution to this problem was to vacillate among different views of his ancient forebears. This leaves his portrait of Socrates a complex and apparently contradictory web of sketches. The literature on Montaigne's reception of Socrates has thus had to wrestle with the essayist's struggle to identify with some aspects of Socrates' multitude of life stories without making him the *exemplum* of a moral manual.

Confronted with these inconsistencies, those scholars who have dealt with the perennial question of Montaigne's reception of Socrates have generally focused on individual sections of the *Essays*, examining their historical sources in a certain isolation from others.⁶ For Hugo Friedrich, who writes that "nothing can be found in European writing of the sixteenth century and before which compares with the rebirth of Socrates in the *Essais*,"⁷ Montaigne's Socrates was a Platonic Socrates, a model human being in his simplicity, his awareness of his own insignificance, and a martyr in his death.⁸ But this interpretation relies disproportionately on the Socrates of Montaigne's final chapter, "On experience," without taking into account other essays; and the example of Friedrich's work stands in for many others. As we will see, Montaigne's depiction of the Greek thinker does not always focus primarily on the Platonic Socrates, nor suggest he was a perfect model.⁹

6 For studies on Montaigne's writing about Socrates' *daemon*, and for interpretations of the "silenic" text, for example, scholars focus on the chapter "On physiognomy." See, to cite a few examples, Cave 1979; Glidden 1993; some essays in Gontier and Myer 2010; Hampton 1989 and 1990; La Charité 1989; Quint 2014; Regosin 1977; Scodel 1983; and Winter 1992–93. MacPhail 2001 also focuses on "On physiognomy," but in order to discern Montaigne's use of Socrates for political and social critique.

7 Friedrich 1991, 53.

8 Friedrich 1991, 53–5.

9 Focusing on the Platonic Socrates does not in fact have to mean an idealized Socrates. In Reeser 2016, we learn how a Platonic Socrates relates to Montaigne's definition of *erôs*.

Fortunately, in recent years some readers have tried to come to terms with Montaigne's deliberate polyvalence with respect to Socrates. Lawrence Kritzman, in what he calls the "Socratic makeover," uses the chapter "On physiognomy" to show that Montaigne's multiple narratives about Socrates construct the space in which the author reveals himself: "In the end, the rhetoric of Montaigne's essay projects exemplarity in the anti-exemplum of a self-portrait; it multiplies physiognomies and therefore refuses to eradicate difference."¹⁰ Kritzman's "narratives" refers to the prose generated by the passages, fragments, and selections Montaigne makes from differing sources about Socrates' life. These narratives are equally important to Alexander Nehamas, who argues that Montaigne's Socrates was a dynamic ethical amalgam the essayist constructed by "stitching" together different passages from mostly Plato and Xenophon.¹¹ Montaigne, Nehamas believes, had two goals: first, based on the point he wants to make at a particular time, he contrives a Socrates that will fit the purpose of that passage; second, taken overall, his portraits collectively construct a "natural," "straightforward," or what Kierkegaard describes as "utilitarian" Socrates.¹²

While in many ways I follow Kritzman and Nehamas in understanding Montaigne's Socrates as constructed from multiple narratives, I offer an opposing historiographical reading of Montaigne's sources, one that leads us to rethink their conclusions. For it was not dialogical (and quasi-hagiographic) authors like Plato and Xenophon who were the essayist's principle inspiration, but rather biographers like Diogenes Laertius (*Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*) and Plutarch (*Lives*),¹³ two authors who in their own times were already "stitching" together biographical information to suit their purposes,¹⁴ to approach ethics through narrative, and, as we might argue in Diogenes' case, to incorporate multiple sources that often expose their subjects' faults. As Montaigne writes in "Of Books":

I am very sorry that we do not have a dozen Laertiuses, or that he is not either more receptive or more perceptive. For I consider no less curiously the fortunes and the lives of these great teachers of the world than the diversity of their doctrines and fancies.

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¹⁰ Kritzman 2009, 153.

¹¹ Nehamas 1998, ch. 4.

¹² Nehamas 1998, 110–11.

¹³ For the way in which it discusses writing portraiture, I could also add Plutarch's *Moralia* (575b).

¹⁴ For detailed analysis of their methods, see Calhoun 2015, chs. 1–2.

[A] *Je suis bien marry que nous n'ayons une douzaine de Laertius, ou qu'il ne soit ou plus estendu [C] ou plus entendu. [A] Car je ne considere pas moins curieusement la fortune et la vie de ces grands praecepteurs du monde, que la diversité de leurs dogmes et fantasies.*

II.10.416

Montaigne takes inspiration from the authors of the *Lives* as he develops his own approach to life-writing over the course of the *Essays*: by weaving a web of anecdotes about Socrates (and many others), he arrives at both an autobiography and a written ethics that mostly eschew positive views and therefore exemplary discourse, replacing them with useful, diverse life experiences and their resonances with the author.¹⁵ Using Diogenes and Plutarch, Montaigne evades the idealization of the philosophers and, by proxy, himself. However, as an author, perhaps just shy of the status of “model,” Montaigne wants his writing (in which he emulates these biographers) to be read as an attempt at getting as close as possible to authenticity. He wants his writing about Socrates in particular to shape that inevitably failed experiment.

2 The Sources: Diogenes Laertius and Plutarch

Montaigne characterizes Diogenes Laertius as a biographer of the philosophers.¹⁶ Diogenes' unfiltered conception of the philosopher's *bios*, in which he divulges both the public, doctrinal aspect and the private, everyday aspect of the philosopher's life, is essential to Montaigne's project, because it has the potential to replace the idealized sage—the philosopher whose thoughts and deeds are always in perfect, perpetual balance—with the fallible and ordinary person. Diogenes presents the great philosophers of antiquity, generally seen

15 My focus on the relation of Socrates' life to Montaigne's writing project is influenced by the approach Terence Cave (1979, 309) takes when he analyzes the relationship Montaigne had to Socrates' death.

16 Since Montaigne did not read much Greek (II.4.363; see Christodoulou 1992), he probably had one of the popular Latin editions of Diogenes, such as Lyon 1556. Most editions of this time reproduced Ambrosio Traversari's translation. However, Pierre Villey believed that Diogenes' “Life of Pyrrho” was inserted into Montaigne's edition of Sextus Empiricus as an illustration of the Skeptic life, and so his understanding of Sextus is probably colored by the paratextual insertion. For an in-depth philological study of the Traversari edition, see Naya 2000, 242–60. For Montaigne's sources for Diogenes Laertius, see Villey 1976, 126–7; for Montaigne's library, see Masson 1939, 475–93, especially the first note. Quotations from Diogenes *Lives* will be from the most recent translation (Mensch 2018) and cited with book and section numbers in parentheses.

as masters of asceticism, virtue, or constancy, in the humbling (and at times grotesque)¹⁷ light of their daily experience; for a Renaissance reader like Montaigne, his biographies, which demystify virtue, catalogue human figures with whom he could relate. Montaigne connects with Diogenes' Socrates, because, like him, he resisted the imputation that he had an exemplary stature, and put great emphasis on living and experience, not just doctrine and theory.

In Montaigne scholarship, although the essayist's debt to Diogenes has been acknowledged,¹⁸ there is very little written about the literary and philosophical intersection between the two writers. This lacuna is surprising, given the overwhelming number of borrowings from Diogenes within his *Essays*. Given that the 1580 edition of the *Essays* weighs heavily in borrowings from the *Life of Pyrrho* (DL 9.61–108), Montaigne must have started his reading there, and then read the rest of Diogenes' *Lives* before the 1588 edition, which bursts with more than 160 citations and paraphrases from 66 other biographies: that is, all but fifteen.¹⁹ According to my reading, the names of the philosophers in Diogenes' work are cited over eight hundred times in the *Essays*, with about a third of those referring to biographical anecdotes that are often directly from Diogenes.

One of the principal lessons Montaigne learns from Diogenes' writing is that by drawing on multiple sources for biographical information about a historical figure, an author can generate a more complex image of the subject. If Montaigne paints his subject from as many angles as possible, the resulting portrait might, like an exercise in cubism, look less realistic than a more synthesized portrayal, but in capturing a lively, moving, changing being, it can reveal the complex inconstancy of human beings. Likewise i(n) Diogenes' *Lives*, multiple sources lead to both contradictions and redundancies. For example, in the "Life of Socrates," Diogenes cites the various collected accounts of the philosopher's married life, which means he lists three different stories:

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- 17 Keep in mind that the one philosopher Diogenes claims is completely consistent between his thoughts and his actions is Diogenes the Cynic (DL 6.78), and this is a person he describes as living in a tub (DL 6.22) and masturbating regularly in public (DL 6.46, 49).
 - 18 Although Villey (1976) notes the overwhelming number of borrowings from Diogenes within the *Essays*, neither he nor any other scholar has considered the Greek's influence on Montaigne's conception of philosophy as a way of life, nor on his subversion of exemplarity.
 - 19 See Montaigne 2004, lvii ("Catalogue des livres de Montaigne"). The philosophers Montaigne does not cite who appear in Diogenes' *Lives* are Cleobulus, Aeschines, Euclides, Simon, Simmias, Glaucon, Cebes, Menedemus, Lacydes, Monimus, Onesicritus, Menippus, Menedemus, Hippasus, and Philolaus. Interestingly, as this volume's editor observes, many of these non-cited philosophers are minor Socratics from Book 2 to whom we can attribute basically no views.

Socrates was married once to Myrto, Socrates was married first to Myrto and then to Xanthippe, or Socrates was married to both women at the same time. Rather than seeing this as a biographical error, Montaigne considers patching together the three anecdotes a more complete sketch of the person. The reader is forced to wonder: was Socrates' faithful to one wife? Did he practice polygamy? Choosing one story and omitting the others would have been an overly heavy-handed editorial choice in Montaigne's eyes, because the choice would likely shape the reader's opinion of Socrates and his moral foundations in marriage.

Reading Diogenes must also have been comforting to Montaigne, providing relief from the strictures of moral perfectionism. The conventional view was that wisdom and virtue result from always thinking and acting in the same way. But the *Lives* do not provide much textual evidence for such behavior: "It is hard to pick out a dozen men who set their lives to a certain and constant course, which is the principal goal of wisdom" (240) ([A] *il est malaisé de choisir une douzaine d'hommes qui aient dressé leur vie à un certain et assuré train, qui est le principal but de la sagesse*, 11.1.332). Indeed, what Montaigne found in Diogenes' *Lives* is that when we take into account both the doctrine and the life of these legendary minds, wisdom was rarely, if ever, a quality they possessed. If their biographies demonstrate that the so-called "sages" themselves gave less than perfect performances, this would help prove that many philosophical doctrines are impossible to instantiate; not even their original teachers could do it.

Yet, for Montaigne, believing in the fallibility of wisdom does not undermine the potential for life writing to conduce to one's moral education. On the contrary, Montaigne was drawn to select, judge, and compare himself to Diogenes' subjects precisely because Diogenes portrays the philosophers in their daily life without skipping over their non-ideal moments. In Montaigne's hands, the familiar façade of the great thinkers crumbles to reveal their private lives, and these are the moments that relate the most to him and his fellow readers; they speak once again to what Kierkegaard criticized as the "utilitarian" quality of Montaigne's Socrates.²⁰ They also reveal the moments of adversity, so often edited out of moral and ethical writing. Montaigne too could have written a very different book about his accomplishments as a statesman, and perhaps compared his actions to some of the political moments in Socrates' life. But his interest in writing the *Essays* was to portray himself in a "naked" and inconstant, ever-changing way, painting a portrait of his private life instead of describing his public service, with this truer self-knowledge essential for

20 For more on how the private lives of the philosophers in Diogenes relates to Montaigne's understanding of his writing style, see Calhoun 2011.

moral scrutiny and, perhaps, improvement. Diogenes' portraits provide a suitable model for this scrutiny of the "naked" self both because of Diogenes' use of multiple, contrasting sources, and because he does not smooth over his subjects' flaws.

Montaigne's other great source is Plutarch, whose *Lives* (which he would have read in Jacques Amyot's French translation from 1559) joined together narrative comparisons of twenty-two (extant) pairs of Greek and Roman men.²¹ These biographical pairings were known as the "parallel" lives. In comparison with the often base and downright degrading stories transmitted by Diogenes, Plutarch's representations of the ancient figures are much more exemplary and glorified.²² Plutarch does make his readers rethink the perfection of his subjects, but in a somewhat less radical way, h(e) opposed life-writing to history. Whereas history was told according to long-accepted evidence in a chronological order, his life-writing gleaned the facts from a variety of sources and changed them according to his thematic needs. According to Robert Aulotte, "in the *Lives*, Plutarch does not propose to demonstrate a succession of facts but rather to capture unchanging parts of the human heart ... More than a historian, he is a psychologist and moralist."²³ Nevertheless, Plutarch was a master of disguising the "un-historical" aspects of his selected biographies. He employed specific techniques of compression (usually making distant events seem close by having them succeed one another in the narrative), displacement (putting an event out of sequence in order to heighten the drama or appear more logical), suppression (omitting secondary events or characters for the sake of brevity and focus), and transfer (re-attributing traits or events from

21 These parallels include: Romulus with Theseus, Numa with Lycurgus, Poplicola with Solon, Fabius with Pericles, Alcibiades with Coriolanus, Timoleon with Paulus Emilius, Pelopidas with Marcellus, Aristides with Marcus Cato, Philopoemen with Flaminius, Lysander with Sylla, Lucculus with Cimon, Crassus with Nicias, Sertorius with Eumenes, Pompey with Agesilaus, Tiberius and Caius Gracchus with Agis and Cleomenes, Demosthenes with Cicero, Demetrius with Anthony, Dion with Brutus. For a possible chronology of their writing, see Konrad 1994, xxvii–xxix. Konrad's introduction provides valuable insight into the project of writing parallel lives, and has an extensive bibliography.

22 Although we could argue that Plutarch's "Life of Alcibiades," found in the parallel with Coriolanus, in which he makes eighteen references to Socrates, was a source of Montaigne's Socrates, Plutarch only tells us about Socrates' love for Alcibiades, and the references to Socrates' life are similar to the ones we find in Diogenes Laertius. It is therefore more in structure than in content that Montaigne follows Plutarch. This structure and these methods are particularly explicit in Plutarch's *Moralia*, in the section on Socrates' daemon, "De genio Socratis," which opens with good and bad methods for portraiture (575b), using terms that reflect the same lexicon as Montaigne (focusing on the many pieces and details of a person instead of a global view).

23 Aulotte 1965, 11.

one subject to another) to achieve verisimilitude in his book.²⁴ His approach was to work within the structure of comparison, presenting each Greek as a pendant to a Roman subject, and often ending the narratives of each pair with a *synkrisis* or rhetorical exercise suggesting a comparison of opposites.²⁵ Despite the *exempla* and the binary form, less complex than the French essayist's own web of comparisons,²⁶ Plutarch like Diogenes influenced Montaigne—his biographies invite the reader to see weaknesses and strengths through contrasting narratives. Montaigne felt a special affinity with Plutarch (indeed, he calls him “his man”):²⁷ the Roman writer sought to dismantle traditional *exempla* and used literary innovation to create space for his own thoughts, even if not exactly the autobiographical ones that Montaigne intends.

The following section examines specific references to Socrates in the *Essays* to show how they help Montaigne to make ethical claims and to construct his self-portrait. These Socratic appearances in the *Essays* include both irreverent, contradictory, patchwork treatments that suggest a debt to Diogenes Laertius and passages whose comparative judgments suggest the essayist is emulating Plutarch.

3 Socrates in the *Essays*

Over the course of various editions of the *Essays*, Montaigne inserted increasingly many philosophers and sources into the manuscript, weaving and reweaving his own voice and anecdotes among them. When I refer to Montaigne “inserting” passages, I refer to the three different layers of text ([A], [B], and [C]) from three editions (1580, 1588, and 1595) of the *Essays* (see note 1 above). Most commonly, an earlier layer ([A] or [B]) will refer to Montaigne while a later addition ([B] or [C], though usually [C]) will discuss Socrates (and other philosophers). Socrates' increasing prominence over the evolution of the text makes his growing importance to Montaigne clear, but the patchwork manner in which he appears suggests his presence grew more out of Montaigne's desire to imitate Diogenes and Plutarch than to imitate Socrates himself. In

24 For more on his methods in action, see Calhoun 2015, ch. 1.

25 For more on Plutarch's *synkrisis*, see Pfeiffer 1994.

26 Montaigne refers to this mosaic as “*pieces rapportées*” and “*lopins*,” which Donald Frame translates both times as “patchwork” (see this chapter's epigraph) to emphasize the scattered visual aspect of variously sourced passages as they are incorporated into the pages of the *Essays*. Significantly, “patchwork” or, more precisely, the Latin word “*cento*,” was used by Erasmus to describe the work of Plutarch (Smith 2007, 175).

27 11.10.416: “*c'est mon homme que Plutarque*.”

the Socrates passages Montaigne manifests not a single coherently argued judgment of the philosopher but an active, evolving intellectual engagement. Socrates is a person to think with.

To begin, there is the question of how exemplary is Socrates in life. In the second edition, there is a passage describing Montaigne's own journey toward achieving balance between his thoughts and his actions. After 1588, the essayist expands this discussion by adding a list of philosophers and what we know about their struggles in this domain. There is a Plutarchan parallel quality to Montaigne's discursion while the topic also recalls the text from Diogenes' *Lives* where Socrates learns to play the lyre and "was constantly dancing" in order to stay in good shape (DL 2.32):

Pythagoras, they say, followed a philosophy that was all contemplation, Socrates one that was all conduct and action; Plato found the balance between the two. But they say so to make a good story, and the true balance is found in Socrates, and Plato is much more Socratic than Pythagorean, and it becomes him better. When I dance, I dance; when I sleep, I sleep; yes, and when I walk alone in a beautiful orchard, if my thoughts have been dwelling on extraneous incidents for some part of the time, for some other part I bring them back to the walk, to the orchard, to the sweetness of this solitude, and to me.

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[C] Pythagoras, disent-ils, a suivy une philosophie toute en contemplation, Socrates toute en meurs et en action; Platon en a trouvé le temperament entre les deux. Mais ils le disent pour en conter, et le vray temperament se trouve en Socrates, et Platon est bien plus Socratique que Pythagorique, et luy sied mieux. [B] Quand je dance, je dance; quand je dors, je dors; voyre et quand je me promeine solitairement en un beau vergier, si mes pensées se sont entretenues des occurences estrangieres quelque partie du temps, quelque autre partie je les rameine à la promenade, au vergier, à la douceur de cette solitude et à moy.

III.13.1103

We deduce that Montaigne identifies much more with Socrates (who followed a philosophy of all "conduct and action") and, from Montaigne's perspective, Plato (whom Montaigne claims was probably more like Socrates than the legends say), than he does with Pythagoras. Montaigne thinks that Socrates' way of life successfully embodied his philosophy by emphasizing action over pure thought.

So as not to imply that he judged the Greek philosopher's life always perfect, Montaigne also treats of his private life and its signs of sub-ideal practice. His goal was to emulate Diogenes by studying Socrates in all situations, including private ones, without a filter. He gives particular focus to his married life. The following passage originally consisted of a story of a French citizen who managed to study better with noises around him, while Montaigne, on the other hand, needed quiet in order to concentrate. In the final edition, however, in the two "C" additions, Montaigne manipulates his personal revelation by offering anecdotes from the lives of Socrates and Seneca. In what follows, notice how this addition contextualizes his original anecdote in a web of lives, a patchwork that does not allow the reader to discern a moral hierarchy. These comparisons help distinguish Montaigne in various ways without presenting him as superior or inferior to any other figure in the web. This is a critical piece to his approach to autobiographical and biographical writing: no one person comes out as most virtuous.

Socrates replied to Alcibiades, who wondered how he could endure the perpetual din of his wife's scolding: "Like those who are accustomed to the ordinary sound of wheels drawing water." I am quite the opposite; my mind is sensitive and ready to take flight; when it is absorbed in itself, the slightest buzz of a fly is the death of it. Seneca, in his youth, having bitten hard on Sextius' example of eating nothing that had been killed, got along without it for a year with pleasure, as he says. And he left off only so as not to be suspected of borrowing this rule from certain new religions that were disseminating it. At the same time, from the precepts of Attalus he adopted this one, not to sleep any more on yielding mattresses; and continued to use, even in his old age, the kind that does not give way under his body. What the practice of his time makes him reckon as austerity, ours makes us consider effeminacy.

829

[C] Socrates respondoit à Alcibiades, s'estonnant comme il pouvoit porter le continuel tintamarre de la teste de sa femme: Comme ceux qui sont accoustumez à l'ordinaire son des roues à puiser l'eau. [B] Je suis bien au contraire: j'ay l'esprit tendre et facile à prendre l'essor; quand il est empesché à part soy, le moindre bourdonnement de mouche l'assassine. [C] Seneque en sa jeunesse, ayant mordu chaudement à l'exemple de Sextius de ne manger chose qui eust prins mort, s'en passoit dans un an avec plaisir, comme il dict. Et s'en laissa seulement pour n'estre soupçonné d'emprunter cette regle d'aucunes religions nouvelles, qui la semoyent.

Il print quand et quand des preceptes d'Attalus de ne se coucher plus sur des loudiers qui enfondrent, et continua jusqu'à sa vieillesse ceux qui ne cedent point au corps. Ce que l'usage de son temps luy faict conter à rudesse, le nostre nous le faict tenir à mollesse.

III.13.1082

Standing like parentheses around Montaigne's own habits, we read a story about Socrates' nagging wife, probably from Xenophon's *Symposium*, and one about Seneca's eating and sleeping habits. To expand the web of subjects, the essayist also mentions Alcibiades, Sextius, and Attalus. In this complex context that he constructs in the later edition, the opening anecdote loses any hint it might have had of didacticism, and we realize that not all actions by a philosopher demonstrate virtue: some are indicative of mere circumstance; others may be morally neutral personality traits. In this light, Montaigne's mind is not inferior to Socrates'. Socrates just happened to be less sensitive to noise by nature. By the same logic, Seneca's sleeping on hard mattresses was less a matter of morals than of taste, since in his context, as we can also relate to today, choosing a firm mattress does not necessarily indicate principled asceticism.

If philosophers sometimes have unusual abilities to withstand certain adversities, Montaigne's thinking is that those are not their teaching moments, not the pieces that function best for moral learning. More useful are biographical anecdotes in which the philosophers struggle with more mundane, everyday issues. Montaigne's selection of stories from Socrates' life therefore reveals a reader who is not an erudite humanist, but rather an average nobleman pondering questions confronting many of Montaigne's peers. This desire to paint "ordinary" virtue reflects his reading of Diogenes' *Lives*, where philosophers are painted in all varieties of circumstances. Passages dealing with Socrates' struggles in his marriage, for example, open up a space in which Montaigne can work his own marriage and family life into his textual criticism and questions. For example, i(n) "Of vanity," Montaigne discusses the philosophers who have enjoyed extensive travel. He explains that his penchant for travel is only natural when we consider the lives of Chrysippus, Cleanthes, Diogenes, Zeno, and Antipater (III.9.978). He admits that this penchant means a desire to leave his family, and he goes on to wonder about the very possibility of being a good husband, it being clear that so many great philosophers had failed. In the following passage, he creates a diminutive of "*homme*" [man] in the form of "*hommenet*" to denote an ordinary being such as himself or the reader, conceived of as the opposite of moral models and exemplars:

Pittacus used to say that everyone had his weakness, and that his was his wife's bad temper: except for that, he would consider himself happy in every respect. It is a very grievous misfortune where a man so just, so wise, so valiant, feels the whole state of his life altered by it; what are we small fry [*hommenetz*] to do?

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[A] *Pittacus disoit que chacun avoit son défaut; que le sien estoit la mauvaise teste de sa femme; hors cela il s'estimerait de tout poinct heureux. C'est un bien poissant inconvenient, duquel un personnage si juste, si sage, si vaillant sentoit tout l'estat de sa vie alteré: que devons nous faire, nous autres hommenetz?*

III.5.871

In a later chapter, Montaigne concludes that "Socrates, it seems to me, tested himself still more roughly, keeping for his exercise the malignity of his wife, which is a test [*essay*] with the naked blade" (307) ["[A] *Socrates s'essayoit, ce me semble, encor plus rudement, conservant pour son exercice la malignité de sa femme: qui est un essay à fer esmoulu*" (II.11.423)].²⁸ In Montaigne's interrogation,²⁹ marriages of the philosophers provide the moral student with no good example; for Pittacus and Socrates it reveals their banal vice. Yet marriage was nevertheless an obstacle that Socrates had to overcome in order to be virtuous, Montaigne suggests. Perhaps it is the sort of obstacle Montaigne could imagine surmounting himself, and this moral proximity is what makes the story an entertaining but also practical lesson in virtue for an *hommenet*.

4 Socrates' Death in the *Essays*

The second way in which Socrates looms large in the *Essays* is as major influence on Montaigne's approach to death, which we can see evolve from one edition to another. Although some of Montaigne's earlier writing suggests

28 Ferguson (2008, ch. 4) observes that even though La Boétie accepted Plutarch's belief in marriage as a gateway to friendship, Montaigne's critical views on women made him a more distant husband who thought that friendship could only be generated between men.

29 Diogenes, who told the same story somewhat differently, concentrated on Pittacus having married a woman of higher social status suggesting young men should marry within their own sphere (1.81).

an interest in the efficacy of the Stoic “*mort volontaire*” or suicide, Montaigne’s optimism about this philosophical choice dissolves and turns into a softer desire to meet his end naturally and without suffering.³⁰ Especially by the additions we find in the 1595 edition of the *Essays*, Montaigne was then living a painful life, after suffering from increased colic, several pernicious kidney stones, and a nearly fatal fall from a horse. Given that many of the philosophers’ deaths were extreme (he calls them “lofty” and “extraordinary” [743]), Montaigne must have felt mired by the same futility he found in trying, as a mere “*hommenet*,” to be a good husband (III.5.872). But working from the complex moral choices Socrates makes at the end of his life, Montaigne is able to show his evolving understanding of mortality. His discussions of Socrates’ death show Diogenean and Plutarchan imitation: once again, he works with a broad selection of sources to shape an image of the philosopher that is changing and serves his ethical and autobiographical aims. As an ethics, these narratives help the reader question what an ideal, virtuous death might look like. In an autobiographical sense, narratives about Socrates’ death provide the literary mirror Montaigne needs to reveal himself and his fears to the reader. (Indeed, his selection of deaths of the philosophers from antiquity gives us a glimpse of the melancholic side of his personality.³¹)

Pierre Hadot writes that Socrates’ death, insomuch as it proved his life to be a training to die, represented the fundamental philosophical choice that founded Platonism.³² Montaigne would have been thoroughly aware of Plato’s efforts to martyrize the philosopher in his reading of the *Apology*. But Montaigne is not (uniquely) interested in the way Socrates’ death formed schools of thought, and, as we have seen, distances himself from the Platonic perfection of Socrates. Montaigne’s take is a wandering one: he admires Socrates’ time in prison, his rumination, and his indifference, but criticizes his choice of death over exile. In the end, Montaigne’s focus is not on arguing for a particular meaning of Socrates’ death but on the value of examining a life of choices, failures included. Patching together these various choices and judging them was what made his writing more Diogenean and Plutarchan than Platonic or Xenophontic.

30 As Démètre Lang (1994, 87–98) puts it, Montaigne arrived at the conviction that “*la vie est digne, au moins tant qu’elle dure, d’être vécue*” (life, as long as it lasts, is worth living).

31 Although I cannot prove that Montaigne contemplated taking his own life, he had a deep interest in the topic of suicide: in his mining of ancient material, he compares it to other modes of death. See, for example, his “A custom of the isle of Cea” (II.3). For more on how Socrates relates to Montaigne’s melancholy, see Screech 1983.

32 Hadot 1995, 94.

In some [C] passages, Montaigne presents Socrates' choice to accept his death in the way it was widely read at the time: the philosopher refused to revoke his beliefs, demonstrating his wisdom and commitment to a morally consistent life. Montaigne shows esteem for Socrates as he writes about his final days in prison.³³ For example,

There is nothing, in my opinion, more illustrious in the life of Socrates than having had thirty whole days to ruminate his death sentence, having digested it all that time with a very certain expectation, without emotion, without alteration, and with a tenor of actions and words rather lowered and relaxed than strained and exalted by the weight of such a reflection.

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[C] *Il n'y a rien, selon moy, plus illustre en la vie de Socrates que d'avoir eu trente jours entiers à ruminer le decret de sa mort; de l'avoir digérée tout ce temps là d'une tres certaine esperance, sans esmoy, sans alteration, et d'un train d'actions et de parolles ravallé plustost et anonchali que tendu et relevé par le poids d'une telle cogitation.*

II.13.608–9

In stark contrast to deaths like Seneca's, Socrates' final days are slow and studied. Since Socrates spent thirty days in prison reflecting on his death before dying, he represents a serene and tranquil death, one of the goals that Montaigne has for his own end. He also approves of the painless nature of his death, comparing it to that of Cato:

Among violent ones [sc. deaths], I picture less comfortably falling from a precipice than being crushed by a falling building, and a piercing sword thrust than a harquebus shot; and I would rather have drunk the potion of Socrates than stabbed myself like Cato.

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33 He also refers to Socrates' trials and sentence more than to any other anecdote from the philosopher's life. The only name he cites more times than Socrates is Plato, who we might refer to as Socrates' "*faiseur de livre*" [bookmaker] in so much as his writings are substantial sources for reconstructing content about the life of Socrates. Diogenes Laertius also cast Socrates' trial and death in a positive light, though without going into great detail, instead referring the reader to Plato (DL 5.42).

[B] *Entre les violentes, j'imagine plus mal aisément un precipice qu'une ruine qui m'accable et un coup tranchant d'une espée qu'une harquebousade; et eusse plustost beu le breuvage de Socrates que de me fraper comme Caton.*

III.9.983

Montaigne's praise continues when he wholeheartedly supports Socrates' attitude of indifference toward death, such as when he argues that death is a natural phenomenon. Following his reading of Plato's *Apology*, Montaigne writes that he was inspired by Socrates' response to the Athenian jurors in which Socrates presented death as a natural phase of life to which one must reconcile oneself: "What does it matter when it comes, since it is inevitable? To the man who told Socrates, 'The thirty tyrants have condemned you to death,' he replied: 'And nature, them'" (64) ["[C] *Que chaut-il quand ce soit, puis qu'elle est inevitable? A celuy qui disoit à Socrates: Les trente tyrans t'ont condamné à la mort.—Et nature a eux, respondit-il*" (I.20.92).]³⁴ We learn from Montaigne that Socrates was so indifferent to death that he willingly delegated the details of his burial to Crito. "Therefore Socrates, to Crito, who at the hour of his death asks him how he wants to be buried, answers: 'As you wish'" (12) ["[C] *Pourtant Socrates à Crito qui sur l'heure de sa fin luy demande comment il veut estre enterré: Comme vous voudrez, respond il*" (I.3.20).]³⁵ Indeed, in this respect Montaigne does treat Socrates almost as an exemplar:

It belongs to the one and only Socrates to become acquainted with death with an ordinary countenance, to become familiar with it and play with it. He seeks no consolation outside the thing itself; dying seems to him a natural and indifferent incident. He fixes his gaze precisely on it, and makes up his mind to it, without looking elsewhere.

632

34 See also DL 2.35.

35 This echoes an earlier example Montaigne tells of Lyco's burial preferences: "The philosopher Lyco wisely instructed his friends to place his body where they should judge best ..." (12) ["[C] *Et le philosophe Lycon prescrit sagement à ses amis de mettre son corps où ils adviseront pour le mieux ...*" (I.3.19)]. The story also makes Socrates a clear foil for Epicurus, whose biography relays his worries for his own posterity. Montaigne finds that bodily pain causes other philosophers to struggle during their final moments, but Epicurus he sees as doubly compromised by his misplaced continuing concern for earthly matters.

[B] *Il appartient à un seul Socrates d'acointer la mort d'un visage ordinaire, s'en aprivoiser et s'en jouer. Il ne cherche point de consolation hors de la chose; le mourir luy semble accident naturel et indifferant; il fiche là justement sa veue, et s'y resoult, sans regarder ailleurs.*

III.4.833

Burdened with his own pain and suffering, Montaigne was fascinated by Socrates' ability, while in the prison, to look death straight in the eye, without flinching. And he agrees with the philosopher that dying is a force of nature that no one should defy. But while Montaigne is certainly curious, perhaps even envious of Socrates' conduct during his trial and in prison, and while he agrees with the philosopher that dying is a natural phenomenon futile to oppose, he finds himself able neither to attain the same indifference nor to agree with Socrates' ultimate decision to poison himself instead of escaping.

Why was escape not a viable moral option? Answering this question provides Montaigne an opportunity to illustrate his own personality as much as Socrates':

What Socrates did near the end of his life, in considering a sentence of exile against him worse than a sentence of death, I shall never, I think, be so broken or so strictly attached to my own country as to do. These divine lives have quite a few aspects that I embrace more by esteem than by affection. And there are also some so lofty and extraordinary that I cannot embrace them even by esteem, inasmuch as I cannot understand them. That was a very fastidious attitude for a man who considered the world his city. It is true that he disdained peregrination and had scarcely set foot outside the territory of Attica. What are we to say of his grudging his friends' money to save his life, and refusing to get out of prison by the intervention of others, so as not to disobey the laws, and that at a time when they were so thoroughly corrupt?

743-4

[C] *Ce que Socrates fait sur sa fin, d'estimer une sentence d'exil pire qu'une sentence de mort contre soy, je ne seray, à mon advis, jamais ny si cassé ny si estroitement habitué en mon païs que je le fuisse. Ces vies celestes ont assez d'images que j'embrace par estimation plus que par affection. Et en ont aussi de si eslevées et extraordinaires, que par estimation mesme je ne puis embrasser, d'autant que je ne les puis concevoir. Cette humeur fut bien tendre à un homme qui jugeoit le monde sa ville. Il est vray qu'il dedaignoit*

les peregrinations et n'avoit gueres mis le pied hors le territoire d'Attique. Quoy qu'il pleignoit l'argent de ses amis à desengager sa vie, et qu'il refusa de sortir de prison par l'entremise d'autrui, pour ne desobéir aux loix, en un temps qu'elles estoient d'ailleurs si fort corrompues.

III.9.973

Unlike Socrates, Montaigne was, as we have already seen, attracted to the benefits of life abroad.³⁶ He knows that in Socrates' place, he would therefore have willingly chosen exile over poison. Although he might at times revere Socrates' *ability* to calmly and reflectively choose death for principled reasons, ultimately Montaigne sees it as an *unnecessary*, premature death. And he believes that while it is wise to accept death with indifference, nonetheless life ought to be lived as long as it is not prohibitively painful to do so. Socrates was not in prohibitive pain, and his attachment to his homeland is ultimately not the "correct" moral example.

Montaigne's most radical challenge to Socrates, however, must be his suggestion that the philosopher's choice sprang from the fear of growing older. The essayist zooms in on the philosopher as a simple, elderly person in a prison cell as though demanding the reader to ask: if we put aside Socrates' reputation and look at some of the facts, can we still be certain the philosopher died from principle and not from human weakness? He writes:

Seeing the wisdom of Socrates and several circumstances of his condemnation, I should venture to believe that he lent himself to it to some extent, purposely, by prevarication, being seventy, and having so soon to suffer an increasing torpor of the rich activity of his mind, and the dimming of its accustomed brightness.

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[C] A voir la sagesse de Socrates et plusieurs circonstances de sa condamnation, j'oserois croire qu'il s'y presta aucunement luy mesme par prevarication, à dessein, ayant de si pres, aagé de soixante et dix ans, à souffrir l'engourdissement des riches allures de son esprit et l'esblouissement de sa clairté accoustumée.

III.2.817

36 However, he was hesitant to say so directly, for fear of appearing a less-than-devoted statesman. Even when he did go abroad, he was not fully at his liberty, as when, in 1581, he was elected mayor of Bordeaux and had to return home to serve. Nonetheless, he craved the anonymity as well as the newness and freedom from home that travel provided.

Few would dare to question the motives behind Socrates' choice to accept the death sentence. Montaigne, already suffering from kidney stones and being himself just a few years shy of dying, raises a pragmatic question: had Socrates, at seventy, begun feeling the aches and pains of old age? Did the philosopher intentionally plead guilty, not from virtue, nor from principle, but in order to hurry nature along and avoid the suffering of dementia?

We learn from the *Essays*, and also from the letters that Montaigne wrote several years before, that the only death Montaigne found truly perfect was the death of his friend La Boétie, who died naturally, humbly, and without much suffering. Especially after the 1580 edition of his *Essays*, in "B" and "C" additions, Montaigne's writings reflect an intensified focus on living out one's life rather than on making extreme decisions. In the chapter "That to philosophize is to learn how to die," his [C] addition illustrates this desire: He writes, "I want a man to act, and to prolong the functions of life as long as he can, but careless of death, and still more of my unfinished garden" (62) [[A] *Je veux qu'on agisse*, [C] *et qu'on allonge les offices de la vie tant qu'on peut*, [A] *et que la mort me treuve plantant mes chous, mais nonchalant d'elle, et encore plus de mon jardin imparfait* (I.20.89)]. While he was earlier interested in action, indifference, and cutting life short, the "C" addition changes the tone of this passage, reflecting instead a peaceful death later in life. His new and old desires are in tension, and this tension continues to color his varied reactions to Socrates' death.

Socrates' death serves Montaigne in one additional way: these are the passages that contain the key metaphor for the author's writing process.³⁷ When Montaigne describes Socrates' "digesting" and "ruminating" over the death sentence, the essayist incorporates a bodily register that ties Socrates into the consubstantiality of Montaigne's overall project. He admires and envies Socrates' ability to slowly "digest" the reality of death as he sits in his cell. And while he cannot claim to attain the same indifference or constancy in the face of his own death, he can admire the application of this sort of belabored working and reworking to his process of writing and rewriting his essays. Montaigne himself had a difficult time "digesting" certain ideas, specifically philosophical and theological doctrine; his process, then, is to get it out on paper, through essaying, without first having fully thought every idea through: "Here you have, a little more decently, some excrements of an aged mind, now hard, now loose, and always undigested" (721) ["[B] *Ce sont icy, un peu plus civilement, des excremens d'un vieil esprit, dur tantost, tantost lache et tousjours indigeste*" (III.9.946)]. These metabolic and bodily metaphors do not appear in Diogenes or Plato; they are Montaigne's unique contribution.

37 For more on rewriting Socrates and nature as a form of deviation, see Cave 1979, 309.

They suggest, once again in reference to Montaigne's two primary aims (self-portraiture, ethical writing), that while we might not be wholly accurate in calling Montaigne's portrait of Socrates a perfect mirror, Montaigne as a writer felt a connection to Socrates when he imagined his state of mind as an elderly person waiting to die in prison.

5 Conclusion

During the Renaissance, the transmission of works about Socrates, new, erudite translations with hefty commentary, together with new works by authors like Erasmus, Rabelais, and Montaigne, all resulted in a varying and sometimes contradictory image of the philosopher. This hermeneutic puzzle contrasted with the Platonic view of a single, exemplary Socrates, and was probably what drew Montaigne, a writer struggling with the truth of self-portraiture and the myths of virtue, to Socrates. Indeed, the careful reader looking for signs of authenticity needed to be wary. Borrowing from Kritzman's terminology, ethics required a makeover. To Montaigne, Socrates was a symbol of the troubling limitations of biographical veracity, and thus ample motivation to find a way more authentically to fashion an "examined" life into a work of writing. His diverse life narratives were also, when taken together, proof that when ethical writing eschews the perfect model, it can be more utilitarian and more universally relevant. Diogenes and Plutarch taught Montaigne how to write about people and philosophy through comparison, to complicate positive claims, and to create context out of a web of subjects. The French essayist adopts this patching together because its unfiltered quality, rough and inconsistent as it may have been, helped him work toward his goal of authenticity, both in writing the self and in writing ethics.

The value of reading Socrates through Montaigne and Montaigne's use of life-writing is likewise double: we find an author's instruction on what it means to struggle with biographical and autobiographical authenticity, and on the pitfalls of reducing people and their personalities to mere words on the page. But Montaigne's Socrates' also explodes the weaknesses of ethical writing by questioning the (at times incredibly fictive and) literary quality of Socrates' reception. His treatment of the philosopher reveals just how modern a thinker Montaigne was when it came to the relationship between philosophical thought and the written word. Montaigne's Socratic mosaic warns readers today about the complex nature of Socratic sources, teaching us to question the moral and ethical motives of each of Socrates' followers and biographers. Thus, in a volume about the reception of Socrates, Montaigne should figure

prominently, because his interest in the philosopher was precisely driven by a critical and skeptical study of how ancient and contemporary authors disseminated their views of how Socrates lived.

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Socrates and Religious Debate in the Scottish Enlightenment

Felicity P. Loughlin

1 Introduction

Socrates was a familiar figure in the cultural life of Enlightenment Europe.¹ His virtuous life, philosophical wisdom, and unjust death attracted the interest of numerous scholars, writers, artists, and composers of the period.² So widespread was the fascination with the ancient philosopher that, as Miriam Leonard has argued, the eighteenth century could well be regarded as “the age of Socrates.”³ His fame was bolstered by new translations of the works of Xenophon and Plato into vernacular languages, which presented his life and teachings to a wider audience than ever before.⁴ Since Benno Böhm’s pioneering research, historians and classicists alike have drawn attention to the prominence of Socrates in eighteenth-century debates ranging from moral philosophy to politics, and from aesthetics to models of scholarship.⁵ I hope to add a new chapter to this European story by exploring the significance of Socrates in the religious debates of contemporary Scotland. This was the age of the Scottish Enlightenment, a period of remarkable intellectual creativity when numerous Scots, including David Hume (1711–76), Adam Smith (1723–90), and Thomas Reid (1710–96), made innovative contributions to the study of human nature, society, and the natural world.⁶ Their ideas had substantial ramifications on the intellectual culture of Europe and North America, shaping

1 The focus here is on the period c. 1700–c. 1800. The precise chronological boundaries of the European Enlightenment remain disputed but are generally drawn between 1650 and 1800. For a flavor of these debates, see Israel 2001, 6–13; Robertson 2005, 6–9.

2 For a helpful bibliography of eighteenth-century writings on Socrates, see Montuori 1981a, 147–53.

3 Leonard 2010, 185.

4 Wilson 2007, 173.

5 Böhm 1929. See also, among others, Trousson 1967; Montuori 1981a and 1981b; Wilson 2007; Leonard 2010; and chapters by Macgregor Morris, Goulbourne, Mainz, and Kalospyros, in the volume of Trapp 2007a.

6 On the Scottish Enlightenment, see Ahnert 2014; Broadie 2003 and 2001; Robertson 2005; Wood 2000; Daiches et al. 1986; Sher 1985; Phillipson 1981; Phillipson and Mitchison 1970.

the subsequent development of disciplines including philosophy, political economy, anthropology, and science.⁷ As one eighteenth-century visitor to Edinburgh observed, the intellectual life of the Scottish capital was so rich that at the market cross he could “in a few minutes take fifty men of genius and learning by the hand.”⁸

In eighteenth-century Scotland, as elsewhere in Europe, Socrates was acclaimed as one of the greatest philosophers of antiquity.⁹ Alexander Simm, a schoolmaster in the town of Bathgate, included an account of the pagan philosopher in his miscellany for young scholars, hoping to inspire them with examples of the “great, good and wise men of antiquity.”¹⁰ To Archibald Campbell (1691–1756), Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Divinity at the University of St Andrews, Socrates was “the most distinguished philosopher there ever was in the world.”¹¹ Similarly, for Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746), Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow, Socrates was to be regarded as the restorer or founder of true philosophy: “*verae Philosophiae instaurator aut inventor*.”¹² His reputation also extended beyond the schools and universities. Readers of Joseph Addison’s popular periodical, *The Spectator*, and subscribers to *The Edinburgh Magazine* frequently encountered references to the biography and teachings of Socrates.¹³ Interest in the Athenian sage continued throughout the century, and several works treating his life and teachings emerged from Scottish printing presses from the 1750s.¹⁴ Yet despite

7 See Broadie 2003, 1–7; Malherbe 2006; Fleischacker 2006.

8 John Amyat, King’s chemist (1776–82), as recorded by his friend William Smellie (1740–95). See Kerr 1996, 2.252.

9 The literature and history of classical antiquity were deeply embedded in the intellectual life of Enlightenment Scotland. Contemporary interest in Socrates formed part of a wider engagement with the history of ancient philosophy. Many of the Scottish literati admired the moral philosophy of the Stoics: see Sher 1985, 175–9; Moore and Silverthorne 2008, xvii–xxviii; Harris 2010; Ahnert 2010. On the reception of Aristotle and the Scottish School of Common Sense Philosophy, see Broadie 2010b, 235–300. On Hume and Epicurean philosophy, see Robertson 2005, 317–24; Harris 2010. On Adam Smith’s reading of ancient philosophy, see Vivenza 2001; Broadie 2010a.

10 Simm 1753, vii, 115–22. Simm quoted the account of the French historian Charles Rollin (1661–1741), whose *Ancient History*, translated into English in 1734, had asserted that “the Pagan world never produced anything so great and perfect as *Socrates*.” See Rollin 1734, IV, 260. Cf. Simms 1753, 119.

11 Campbell 1739, 95.

12 Hutcheson 1764, 4.

13 Examples included references to Socrates’ teachings on finding contentment. See Addison 1776 vol. 8, 19, 85, 214, 319. See also the discussion of Socrates’ death in Ruddiman 1762 vol. 5, 24–5.

14 Examples included Xenophon 1757, Bushe 1762, and a discussion of Socrates by the Scottish minister and historian Walter Anderson (*d.* 1800). See Anderson 1791, 145–74.

the high esteem in which Socrates was held, scholarship on Socratic reception in the Scottish Enlightenment remains limited.¹⁵ As we will see, religion loomed large in the Scottish engagement with Socrates, which concentrated particularly on his arguments for the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, as recorded by Xenophon and Plato. The case of Scotland thus reaffirms Miriam Leonard's recent observation that the "question of religion ... was never far from the surface of the Enlightenment's Socratic preoccupations."¹⁶

The chapter begins by outlining the extent to which Scottish perceptions of Socrates' religious views were indebted to earlier scholarly traditions, above all Renaissance humanism. It subsequently situates the Scottish discussion of Socrates' religious thought in its wider European context. The remainder of the chapter demonstrates that, although the Scottish interest in Socrates' religious beliefs formed part of broader European discussions, it was primarily fuelled by more local debates over natural religion, which divided the established Presbyterian Church of Scotland. This dispute centered on the extent to which human reason could discern the principles of true religion. Were human beings entirely dependent on divine revelation for religious enlightenment, or could they use their rational faculties to discern fundamental truths about God and the soul? What was the relationship between human nature and religious belief? Scottish intellectuals, particularly heterodox writers who disputed the orthodox line on natural religion, hoped that the religious arguments of Socrates, one of the most celebrated philosophers in history, would provide valuable historical evidence that would determine the answers to these questions. This section focuses especially on the writings of these authors. Particular attention is paid to Archibald Campbell. Once a forgotten figure in the intellectual history of the Scottish Enlightenment, Campbell's theology, moral philosophy, and theories of human nature have recently been recognized as some of the most notable and influential works of early eighteenth-century Scotland.¹⁷ As this discussion will demonstrate, he also carried out one of the most extensive and original investigations of Socrates' religious beliefs of the eighteenth century.

15 To my knowledge, Thomas Ahnert has carried out the only existing work on this topic. Ahnert has shown that Socrates' uncertainty regarding the existence of an afterlife was drawn into debates over the relationship between Christianity and morality. See Ahnert 2010, 58–61; 2014, 43–4, 62–4, 91–2.

16 Leonard 2012, 27.

17 For the most recent assertions of Campbell's significance in the history of the Scottish Enlightenment, see Mills 2015; Maurer 2012; Skoczylas 2008. For earlier attestations, see Cameron 1982, 124–28; Stewart 1990, 4; 1996, 228–9; Turco 1999, 89–101.

The chapter seeks not only to shed new light on the importance of Socrates to the religious debates of the Scottish Enlightenment, but also to revise the ongoing tendency to dismiss the extent to which eighteenth-century thinkers engaged with Socrates' ideas and teachings. This dimension of Socratic reception has largely been ignored while research into the symbolic uses of Socrates has expanded. Peter Gay, who did much to draw attention to the widespread engagement with antiquity that took place across eighteenth-century Europe, thus argued that "Socrates was a symbol for the Enlightenment more through his death than through his ideas," serving the *philosophes* as an embodiment of the war between philosophy and superstition.¹⁸ In a contemporary study, Raymond Trousson suggested that a "mythical" Socrates dominated the eighteenth century, as the ancient philosopher became little more than a reflection of contemporary polemical positions.¹⁹ Kevin Berland agreed that eighteenth-century thinkers were "concerned very little with the 'historical Socrates,'" appropriating his image for their various causes so that he "became a vehicle for, rather than a source of instruction."²⁰ More recently, Emily Wilson has suggested that Socrates' utility as a "philosophic model" of the public intellectual became "more important than anything he actually said or did,"²¹ while for Glenn Most the eighteenth-century interest in Socrates had "little to do with the exact lineaments of Socrates' philosophy" but centered on his symbolic role as a "model and a martyr" who personified "reason and virtue."²² I hope to demonstrate here that while the story of Socrates' life and death was adopted as a useful symbol for various competing causes, interest in the *historic* Socrates and his ideas did not disappear. On the contrary, it is only by setting the sincere, critical engagement with the ideas of the ancient philosopher alongside Socratic myth-making that we can fully appreciate the significance of Socrates in shaping the intellectual culture of Enlightenment Europe.

18 Gay 1966, 81–2.

19 Trousson 1967, 28: "Socrate, au XVIII^e siècle, a subi la loi qui gouverne les mythes et les thèmes littéraires: devenu polyvalent, il peut au besoin représenter des aspirations diverses, voire contradictoires. Il sera donc le reflet des idées, de la morale, des scrupules, du tempérament de chacun."

20 Berland 1986, 299.

21 Wilson 2007, 178–9.

22 Most 2007, 3.

2 The Religious Wisdom of Socrates: A Humanist Legacy

For eighteenth-century Scots, Socrates' religious wisdom was central to his reputation as one of the greatest philosophers of antiquity. When selecting material on Socrates for his *Miscellaneous Tracts* (1753), Alexander Simm thus devoted considerable space to Xenophon's report of his conversations on divine providence.²³ Socrates' views on religion also dominated Francis Hutcheson's account of the philosopher in his *Logicae Compendium* (1756), a student textbook on logic that began with an overview of the history of philosophy.²⁴ Hutcheson described how Socrates "gave himself completely to the cultivation of true piety and the knowledge of God," that he taught the immortality of the soul, that he argued for the existence of divine judgement in the afterlife, and that he asserted that "excellence consists in being as like to God as possible."²⁵ David Hume, defending his own skeptical philosophy against accusations of impiety, noted that although the pious Socrates had "carried his Philosophical Doubts to the Highest Degree of Scepticism" he was generally acknowledged as "the wisest and most religious of the Greek philosophers."²⁶ In his *Natural History of Religion* (1757), Hume also drew attention to the relative sophistication of Socrates' belief in an omniscient supreme deity, which far exceeded the creed of the "vulgar" pagan polytheists, who imposed limits on the gods' knowledge, and whose theology was so inferior that they were little more than "superstitious atheists."²⁷ Scottish printers also produced translations, commentaries, and discussions of Socrates' religious views to cater to their readers' interests.²⁸ Fascination with Socratic religious thought continued into

23 Simm 1753, 117–19. As noted above, Simm drew his short description of Socrates from Rollin's *Ancient History*. Cf. Rollin 1734, 220–3; Xen. *Mem.* 1.4.11–13.

24 As noted in Ahnert 2010, 58.

25 For this passage in the original Latin, see Hutcheson 1756, 4–5. For a modern translation, see Moore and Silverthorne 2006, 4–5.

26 Hume 1745, 20.

27 Hume 1757, 25, 96. Hume's discussion of Socrates' religious beliefs in the *Natural History of Religion* constitutes his most substantial treatment of his views. He also displayed an interest in Socrates' views on government (Hume 1760, 2.314–15) and his moral conduct (Hume 1760, 4.151, 4.164).

28 These included two editions of Xenophon's *Symposium* translated by James Welwood, first printed in London in 1710, and reissued by separate printers at Glasgow in 1750. Both were accompanied by Welwood's essay on Socrates' "doctrine and death," addressed to the young Scottish noblewoman Lady Jane Douglas; see Welwood 1750a and 1750b. A letter of 1746 from David Hume to William Mure of Caldwell suggests that Thomas Amory's *Dialogue on Devotion* (1733), prefaced with a "Conversation of Socrates on the Being and Providence of God," was also published at Glasgow around this time. It is thus possible that one of the 1745 editions of this work, to which no place of publication has yet been

the latter decades of the period. Thus Walter Anderson's (*d.* 1800) *Philosophy of Ancient Greece Investigated* (1791), published in Edinburgh, discussed the accounts by Xenophon and Plato of Socrates' conversations on the existence of a supreme deity who governs the world through his providence, and asserted that his theology was intimately connected with his moral philosophy.²⁹

As their praise for Socrates' teachings on the existence of a supreme deity, divine providence, and the immortality of the soul indicates, Scottish intellectuals were impressed by the extent to which the pagan philosopher's religious views conformed to Christian theology. They were by no means unique in this regard. As Ian Macgregor Morris has noted, many eighteenth-century thinkers, including the English politician and historian Temple Stanyan (1675–1752), the Fellow of the Royal Society and dramatist Amyas Bushe (*d.* 1773), and the French scholar and priest Claude Millot (1726–85), went so far as to regard Socrates as a proto-Christian.³⁰ As earlier chapters in this volume have shown, Socrates' reputation for religious wisdom was rooted in much earlier traditions of scholarship, which dated back to late antiquity.³¹ Several patristic writers had praised aspects of Socrates' religious ideas that corresponded to Christian teachings, while maintaining that the gospel offered far greater enlightenment.³² This group included Justin Martyr (*d.* 165), who praised Socrates' rational rejection of the pagan gods, underlined the parallels between Socrates' views on the immortality of the soul and Christian doctrine on divine judgement, and regarded Socrates as a "Christian before Christ."³³ Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–c. 215) also commended Socrates' belief in the existence of the afterlife and his intimations of a divine creator.³⁴ Patristic authors were not, however, united in their admiration of Socrates: Tertullian (c. 160–c. 220), for instance, criticized Socrates' inconstancy, as revealed by his death-bed request that a cock be sacrificed to Asclepius.³⁵ Socrates' reputation as a "holy philosopher" was greatly strengthened during the Renaissance, when new translations of the works of Plato and Xenophon appeared, and the early

ascribed, was produced by a printer at Glasgow. See "Letter 6" in Kilbansky and Mossner 1954, 14.

29 See Anderson 1791, 153–61.

30 Morris 2016, 212–13.

31 See the chapters by Juraj Franek and Elvira Wakelnig (both in this volume).

32 On attitudes towards Socrates in the early church, see especially Edwards 2007, 127–33 and Franek (in this volume). See also Trousson 1967, 13–15; Montuori 1981b, 6–8.

33 Justin *Apol.* 1.5, 1.18, 1.44–6.

34 Clem. Al. *Strom.* 5.2, 5.14.

35 Tert. *Apol.* 46; Min. Fel. *Oct.* 26, 38. On Tertullian and his significance as the first Latin author to discuss Socrates, see especially the chapter by Juraj Franek in this volume. See also Edwards 2007, 130.

humanists strove to defend the value of a classical education against concerns that over-exposure to pagan literature would damage Christian scholars.³⁶ With this in mind, Leonardo Bruni (1370–1444) emphasized that Socrates' teachings and piety resonated clearly with Christian teachings and doctrines.³⁷ Marsilio Ficino (1433–99) was particularly influential in bolstering Socrates' reputation for religious wisdom and claimed that the pagan sage had been the recipient of divine enlightenment.³⁸ The eighteenth century inherited this intellectual tradition, which had done so much to cement Socrates' reputation for religious wisdom. Yet their enquiries into this aspect of his teachings were also shaped by contemporary religious and philosophical debates, above all by the controversial issue of natural religion.

3 Socrates and the Problem of Natural Religion

The role of reason in the formation and development of religious belief was a question that had preoccupied Christian scholars for centuries, but from the late seventeenth century it took on new resonance and urgency due to the threat of deism.³⁹ Although deists did not subscribe to a unitary set of doctrines, they tended to deny the necessity of divine revelation and to assert that human reason was entirely sufficient for the discovery of all fundamental religious truths requisite for salvation. It was generally agreed by Christians and deists alike that the most basic religious truths consisted of the belief in a supreme, benevolent, and providential deity and in the immortality of the soul. For eighteenth-century Christians, however, the deists had gravely overstated the sufficiency of these fundamental truths and threatened to plunge their contemporaries into a soul-destroying "modern paganism."⁴⁰ Socrates' reputation as the most religious of the pagan philosophers meant that he was frequently drawn into European debates over the extent to which

36 On the reception of Socrates in the Italian Renaissance, including the liberties taken by Bruni in presenting a pious Socrates for modern readers, see Hankins 2016. See also Montuori 1981b, 8–11.

37 Hankins 2007, 186–9.

38 Hankins 2007, 191–6.

39 For a helpful overview of "philosophical theology" in the Christian tradition, see Alston 1998, 238–48. On the problem of defining "deism" as a unitary set of ideas, see Hudson 2008, 1–28. On the English deists, see also Champion 1992.

40 This expression was used by the Scottish minister and Professor of Divinity Thomas Halyburton (1674–1712). See Halyburton 1714, 25.

human reason, without the assistance of divine revelation, could discover true religion.⁴¹

For a free-thinker such as Voltaire, the wise Socrates was held up as a disciple of a deistic rational religion, whose knowledge of God stemmed from the study of the natural world, and whose virtue contrasted with the bigotry and superstition of those who sentenced him to death for impiety.⁴² By contrast, Johann Georg Hamann (1730–88) argued in his *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* (1759) that Socrates' recognition of his own ignorance was his greatest achievement.⁴³ For Hamann, as Miriam Leonard notes, this "realization of one's own ignorance was tantamount to the acknowledgement of a realm of faith that exists beyond the domain of reason."⁴⁴ Amyas Bushe, meanwhile, regarded Socrates' religious views as "the nearest approaches made by uninspired reason, to that perfect dispensation, which the gospel affords to mankind."⁴⁵ Similarly, it was because he considered Socrates to have discovered the immortality of the soul through reason that the Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn chose him as a spokesperson for rational theology in his popular rendition of Plato's *Phaedo*.⁴⁶ As the English translation of 1789 made clear, Mendelssohn "endeavours to offer those arguments which a man like Socrates, who was desirous of founding his belief upon sound reason, would find, at the present day, after the efforts of so many men of genius, in support of his opinion."⁴⁷

4 The Critique of Deism and Orthodoxy: Socrates in the Scottish Enlightenment

The Scottish engagement with Socrates' religious beliefs belonged to this wider European debate on natural religion. Yet it was shaped by the particularities of the arguments over reason and religion that were taking place in Enlightenment Scotland. The very possibility of natural religion was one of the most divisive

41 Cf. Berland 1986, 299.

42 This was the message conveyed in Voltaire's *Socrate* (1759), 82–3: "rien dans la nature ne nous avertit qu'ils [the gods of the pagan pantheon] existent; tandis que la nature entière nous annonce un Dieu & un Père." On Voltaire's use of Socrates to defend deism, see Goulbourne 2016, 232–41; Trousson 1967, 33–43.

43 For a translation and commentary of this work, see O'Flaherty 1967.

44 Leonard 2012, 128.

45 Bushe 1762, advertisement [not paginated]. On Bushe's approach to Socrates, see Berland 1986, 303–8.

46 On Mendelssohn and Socrates, see the excellent discussion in Leonard 2012, 17–64.

47 Mendelssohn 1789, vii.

issues in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. As Thomas Ahnert has recently shown, orthodox Presbyterians were far more confident that human reason could discover fundamental religious principles than has previously been recognized.⁴⁸ The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), the Calvinist creed to which the established church required its members to subscribe, asserted that the “goodness, wisdom, and power of God” was made manifest by “the light of nature, the works of creation and providence” (1.1). Orthodox doctrine thus affirmed that reasoned observation of the natural world could lead human beings to acknowledge the existence and attributes of God. This teaching was bound up with conceptions of divine justice, since it implied that all humans, irrespective of their access to the scriptures, were “inexcusable,” and therefore deserving of punishment, if they failed to seek out and worship the deity (1.1). The orthodox also tended to agree that reason could discern the immortality of the soul. They claimed, for instance, that it was evident that the soul was an immaterial substance, and that it was therefore not subject to the death and decay of material bodies.⁴⁹ They also believed that God’s goodness meant that all human beings had to be able to discover this truth, or they could not be justly damned for failing to acknowledge their dependence on divine grace for their eternal happiness.⁵⁰

As Ahnert has demonstrated, during the eighteenth century, this orthodox approach to natural religion, and by extension the theories of divine justice and salvation that hinged upon it, was attacked on two fronts. On the one hand, the Kirk (the Church of Scotland) feared deistic claims that natural religion was entirely sufficient for salvation, rendering revelation entirely obsolete. The promulgation of this message in Matthew Tindal’s *Christianity as Old as the Creation* (1730) reignited these anxieties.⁵¹ The orthodox stance on natural religion was simultaneously challenged by heterodox Presbyterians within the Kirk, who cast doubt on the ability of human reason to gain certain knowledge of the existence of a supreme, providential deity and the immortality of the soul. They argued that salvation was not dependent on doctrinal knowledge, but rested on moral conduct.⁵² Originating among a group of heterodox clergymen in the early decades of the eighteenth century, these ideas were later taken up by the “Moderate” party that dominated the Kirk from the 1750s.⁵³ For these heterodox thinkers, the history of Socrates’ religious beliefs offered a valuable

48 Ahnert 2014, 45–51, 96–105.

49 Ahnert 2014, 45.

50 Ahnert 2014, 49–50.

51 Tindal 1730, on which see Mills 2015, 730–33.

52 Ahnert 2014, 34–51, 78–93.

53 Ahnert 2014, 37, 82–93, 100–3. On the “Moderates,” see also Sher 1985.

opportunity to prove, against both the deists and orthodox Presbyterians, the need to reassess the ability of reason to discover religious truth.

The most rigorous Scottish investigation into Socrates' religious views was carried out by Archibald Campbell, a heterodox minister and Professor of Divinity and Ecclesiastical History at the University of St Andrews.⁵⁴ As a young student in Glasgow, Campbell had been deeply impressed by John Simson (1667–1740), a controversial teacher who encouraged his divinity students to debate the doctrinal standards of the Church of Scotland, and to regard the scriptures as the only certain guide to true religion.⁵⁵ Like Simson, Campbell's heterodox views would attract the censure of the General Assembly of the Kirk.⁵⁶ When he was appointed to the professorship at St Andrews, Campbell delivered a bold inaugural lecture on the inability of human reason to discern the essential doctrines of natural religion, which was published in 1733 as the *Oratio de vanitate luminis naturae*. This innovative work examined the arguments that the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers had put forward in support of the existence of a supreme deity and the immortality of the soul. Plato's account of Socrates' views on these topics featured prominently in Campbell's discussion.⁵⁷ For Campbell, the unconvincing demonstrations provided by the few pagan philosophers, such as Socrates, who had upheld the principles of natural religion offered compelling historical evidence that they did not owe their beliefs to rational inquiry. Instead, he argued, these principles had been passed down through tradition and had ultimately originated in divine revelation.⁵⁸ Though Campbell positioned his work as a defense of the truth of Christianity against the threat of deism, his critique of the very possibility of natural religion attracted the censure of the General Assembly and was subject to examination by the Committee for the Purity of Doctrine.⁵⁹

Undaunted by the cautions he received, Campbell expanded his study of the pagan philosophers' knowledge of natural religion and published his findings in

54 On Campbell's popularity among his students, see Allardyce 1996, 267.

55 On the influence of Simson on Campbell, see Skoczylas 2008, 75–83. On Simson's controversial theological views, see Skoczylas 2001.

56 Campbell had already attracted the ire of orthodox Presbyterians for his *Enquiry into the Original of Moral Virtue* (1728, rev. ed. 1733), which contradicted Calvinist doctrine on the utter depravity of human nature; see Skoczylas 2008, 83–98; Maurer 2012, 13–27.

57 Campbell 1733, 11–20, 32.

58 Campbell 1733, 35: *Quod vero per animos hominum antiquissimorum, opinio pervaserit de immortalitate animarum, de summo Numine, divinaque providentia; hoc mihi argumento est firmissimo, Deum cum hominibus scientiam rerum olim communicasse, eisque divinitus, seu via quadam extraordinaria, res sacras, aut religiosa aliqua jura revelasse.*

59 On Campbell's hostility towards deism, see Mills 2015, 733–5. On the committee, see Maurer 2015, 264–73. For Campbell's defense of his *Oratio*, see Campbell 1736, 12–21.

the vernacular in his *Necessity of Revelation* (1739). As Robin Mills has recently argued, this little-known work merits attention as the first attempt to apply the Scottish Enlightenment's science of human nature to the study of religion.⁶⁰ Through consciously adopting the terminology of Baconian and Newtonian natural philosophy, Campbell aimed to harness the prestige of the new science to bolster his critique of natural religion.⁶¹ As Mills has shown, he presented his work as an "impartial enquiry" into the "religious powers of human nature," which would test its "hypothesis" through "facts and experiments."⁶² Despite this appeal to the methods of natural philosophy, however, Campbell's approach was philological, and his interpretation of humanity's religious capacities was profoundly shaped by his reading of ancient Greek and Roman texts. As we will see, Campbell's *Necessity of Revelation* is also significant for its innovative engagement with Socrates' thought, which was central to his demonstration of the inability of human reason to discern the principles of natural religion.

Socrates' importance for Campbell's argument rested on his reputation as "the most distinguished philosopher that ever was in the world" (95). We have noted that Socrates' religious wisdom contributed significantly to securing his status among the Scottish *literati* as one of the greatest philosophers of antiquity. The high esteem in which Socrates was held was also firmly based on his reputation as the first philosopher to turn his attention from natural to moral philosophy and to focus on ethics.⁶³ Socrates' philosophical excellence gave his testimony on the ability of reason to discover the existence of God and the immortality of the soul added significance for Campbell and his contemporaries. If as remarkable a thinker as Socrates had been unable to offer convincing rational demonstrations of the principles of natural religion, there was little hope for the rest of humankind.

Campbell began by exploring Socrates' arguments in favor of the immortality of the soul. As in the *Oratio*, Campbell stressed the historical credibility of his account by referring explicitly to his sources, which included Plato's *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, and *Phaedo*, and by supplying translations of all relevant passages. Campbell anticipated the objection that Plato's testimony was unreliable by acknowledging that his discussion was based on Socrates' theology "as *Plato*

60 Mills 2015, 728–46. As Mills notes, this endeavor is usually attributed to David Hume and his *Natural History of Religion* of 1757 (738).

61 Mills 2015, 735–40.

62 Campbell 1736, 4–5; 26–31; 64. For further examples of Campbell's use of such language, see Mills 2015, 736–8.

63 On Socrates' new focus on ethics, see Hume 1739–40, 1.6; Simm 1753, 115; Hutcheson 1764, 4–5; Anderson 1791, 148–51.

represents it" (99).⁶⁴ His concern to defend the overall reliability of his work is also evident in his defense of limiting the scope of his investigations to ancient pagan philosophy in Greece and Rome, rather than extending his survey to include "the more *eastern* nations." As Campbell argued, he preferred select sources that he could consult in their original languages to avoid depending on secondary reports, which may mistakenly attribute Christian beliefs to pagan writers:

I rather chose to instance only in facts given out by *heathens* themselves, especially their learned men and philosophers: because taking the account of things immediately from those persons, who were left to conceive their religious sentiments, as their natural powers would enable them; there seems to be no danger of our being imposed upon by a false representation: whereas our late historians being prepossessed with a set of religious principles of their own, they are in hazard of explaining the religious *phaenomena* of the *heathen* world according to their own prepossessions, or in a consistency with their own particular scheme of things.

CAMPBELL, *Necessity of Revelation* 370

Campbell began his analysis of Socrates' beliefs in the immortality of the soul with a discussion of Plato's *Phaedrus*. He described Plato's account of Socrates' claim that as the soul was not dependent on any other being for its existence, it possessed "self-motion," and "that which hath *self-motion*, since it never deserts itself, must continue always in motion" (96–7, referring to *Phdr.* 245c–246a). Campbell challenged his readers to engage directly with Socrates' reasoning here. As any Christian knew, Campbell pointed out, the human soul could never be regarded as self-moving because it was dependent on God for its creation (97). Self-motion was therefore more convincing as an argument in favor of the "*necessary eternal* existence of that being whom we call God," who formed all things from nothing, than of "the future existence of human souls" (97). By encouraging his Christian readers to look more deeply at the foundations of Socrates' belief in the immortality of the soul, Campbell sought to undermine the extent to which Socrates' faith in this doctrine could be regarded as the product of reason.

Turning his attention to Plato's *Republic*, Campbell translated Socrates' argument that the soul must be immortal since things can only destroyed

64 Similarly, Campbell defended his analysis by clarifying that his argument was "supported from Socrates's (or Plato's) inconclusive proofs" (1739, 7).

either by “an outward evil” or by “a distemper in its own bowels” (98, referring to *Resp.* 10.608d–611c). According to Socrates, Campbell noted, no outward evil was capable of damaging the soul, while its “only inherent evil or distemper” was “*vice or unrighteousness*,” which is not sufficiently powerful to destroy it, so that the soul must “necessarily continue its existence.” Campbell once again sought to encourage his readers to acknowledge the deficiencies he perceived in Socrates’ argument. Appealing to the intelligence of his audience, he argued that “it would be no compliment to the reader’s philosophy, should I offer to shew him, that the sagacious, and the wise *Socrates* is here no more than a mere trifling *sophister*” (98). Such arguments, he asserted, were in fact detrimental to encouraging true conceptions of the soul, as they tended to promote the erroneous notion that “*souls* are a sort of *self-existent* or *independent* beings, whose number can neither be augmented or diminished” (99).

Campbell subsequently considered Plato’s *Phaedo*, which offered an account of Socrates’ conversations on the immortality of the soul shortly before his death. Situating this work in its historical context, Campbell suggested that it was likely to contain Socrates’ most compelling arguments on the subject:

if this great and good man was led by any series or connexion of things in nature, to apprehend the immortality of the soul; we may well rest satisfied that upon this occasion, in the distinctest manner he was able, he would certainly lay it before his friends, whom he was now about to leave, and for whose happiness, he always bore a most tender concernment.

CAMPBELL, *Necessity of Revelation* 99–100

Translating from Plato, Campbell reported Socrates’ appeal to “an *ancient tradition*, that our souls go hence into another world, and return from *that to this* again” (100, referring to *Phd.* 70c). By including this passage, Campbell drew attention to the significance of existing knowledge, rather than rational inquiry, in forming the Athenian philosopher’s views on the immortality of the soul. He subsequently turned his attention to Socrates’ own arguments in defense of this belief. First he reported Socrates’ claim that souls must necessarily return to life after the death of the body since all things arise from their opposites (101; *Phd.* 70d–72a). As Campbell pointed out, this argument was connected with the philosopher’s belief in the pre-existence of the soul, for “if it is true that our soul was in being, before we were born, then of necessity when it comes to life, it proceeds, so to speak, from the bosom of death” (102; *Phd.* 72e). He noted that the same erroneous conception of the soul’s pre-existence had been posited by other philosophers, including Pythagoras

and Sextus Empiricus. For Campbell, arguments of this kind made it plain that philosophers, when “left to the conduct of their own understanding in this sort of religious matters, are quite bewildered, and meanly give themselves up to the wildest delusions” (102).

Campbell looked more favorably upon Socrates’ claim in the *Phaedo* that the immortality of the soul could be deduced by its “uncompounded” nature, and suggested that, on the surface, this argument “seems to bid fairer than anything yet advanced, to make good this important article” (103). Campbell approved of Socrates’ perception that uncompounded things, such as beauty and goodness, are unchanging. A closer examination, however, revealed the logical deficiencies in Socrates’ demonstration. He pointed out to his readers that Socrates’ assertion that the soul was uncompounded rested solely on its invisibility rather than its indivisibility (103–5, 100; *Phd.* 78c–80d). He poured scorn on Socrates’ claim that “changeable things are *visible*, or are perceived by some of our *senses*; while the things that continue always uniform ... can only be apprehended by *thought*, and are *invisible*” (104). For Campbell, this argument was “mean and unphilosophical,” and he was certain that any “reader upon hearing it, is fully satisfied, that such reasoning now a days only becomes a school boy” (105). To settle the point, he brought another ancient philosopher into dialogue with the Athenian sage, quoting a passage from Lucretius’s *De Rerum Natura*, which demonstrated that the wind, though invisible, was nevertheless a material thing, since it strikes at the senses (105–6; *Lucr.* 1.267–79, 295–304). By contrast, he presented Socrates’ final argument in defense of the soul’s immortality in the *Phaedo*—that opposites will always repel one another, and as the soul “always brings life to the body” it will always repel death—as so deficient that it required no rebuttal (106–7; *Phd.* 104e–107a).

For Campbell, the weaknesses in Socrates’ proofs for the immortality of the soul demonstrated that this belief could never have sprung from rational argument:

What way so ever *Socrates* came to be convinced of this truth [sc. the immortality of the soul] himself, it should be extremely manifest, he by no means arrived at it in pursuing any series of ideas or notions, that could arise to one’s mind from the nature and relation of things. He is much like a man, who without all sort of reasoning has somewhere or other picked up a truth, but can give no account of it; and therefore to prevent the shame of declaring for a truth, without sufficient reason to support him, he casts about to justify his opinion in the best manner he can, without being able to advance anything to the purpose.

CAMPBELL, *Necessity of Revelation* 107

Campbell noted that Socrates himself had acknowledged that belief in the immortality of the soul was liable to many doubts and objections, and he pointed out that most pagan philosophers, including Cicero, had remained unconvinced by his arguments (108). Marshalling this historical testimony against the deists and the orthodox, Campbell asserted that the evidence of antiquity proved that even as wise a philosopher as Socrates was unable to provide a convincing rational demonstration of this fundamental religious principle:

And however some people may imagine, that the article now before us [sc. the immortality of the soul] is ... so easy to be comprehended, that every *plowman*, and every *spinster*, is able without any difficulty to perceive it, and to answer any objections that can be made to it; yet *Socrates*, a philosopher of the deepest penetration in moral questions, was not able to convince men of good discernment who differed from him, and to put an end to their doubts and difficulties. And in truth, all the reasons, whereby he pretends to make out a future state of existence, are only so many *witty conceits*, prettily expressed, that can never bring conviction to a thinking man.

CAMPBELL, *Necessity of Revelation* 108

Campbell applied the same treatment to Socrates' belief in a supreme, providential deity. He noted that only a handful of ancient philosophers had ever believed in an infinite, intelligent mind akin to the deity. The first to do so was Anaxagoras, from whom Socrates took this idea (301). For orthodox Presbyterians, as we have seen, rational contemplation of the harmony and order in the universe testified to the existence of a divine creator. Yet, as Campbell noted, this was not the case for Anaxagoras, who attributed the birth of the animal world and the heavenly bodies to the elements (317–31). Nor did Socrates' belief in an infinite mind originate in his study of the natural world. Drawing his evidence from Plato's *Phaedo*, Campbell noted that Socrates himself had confessed that he had stumbled across this teaching by chance, having discovered it in a work by Anaxagoras.⁶⁵ It was clear, therefore, that Socrates' discovery of God's existence was not "the reward of his rational inquiries: it was a thing quite *new, unthought, unheard of* by *Socrates*, till he chanc'd to meet with it in *Anaxagoras's* book" (332; *Phd.* 97c–98a). Far from blaming Socrates for failing to deduce the existence of a creator from

65 For other references to Anaxagoras in the Scottish Enlightenment, see Ramsay 1748–9, 73–4; Hutcheson 1764, 4; and Hume 1757, 32 n. a, where the philosopher is singled out for his belief in an intelligent mind who made the universe.

the natural world, Campbell praised his “wise and prudent” recognition of the inability of human reason to determine the “nature and origin of the universe” (341).

Socrates’ religious beliefs thus played a pivotal role in Campbell’s defense of his claim that “in order to introduce even *natural* religion among human kind, foreign instruction, or *supernatural* revelation is ... absolutely and indispensably necessary” (383). For Campbell, it was clear that the few pagan philosophers, such as Socrates, who had believed in a supreme deity and the immortality of the soul had owed these ideas to traditional knowledge, passed down from generation to generation, which could ultimately be traced back to the divine revelation received by Noah after the Flood (383–406). If as distinguished a philosopher as Socrates had been unable to find compelling arguments for the immortality of the soul, and had owed his belief in an infinite mind to the chance perusal of a book by Anaxagoras, the very possibility of natural religion was highly questionable.

Campbell’s detailed engagement with Socrates’ religious arguments was unique. Yet several of his contemporaries, who shared his doubts over the ability of reason to discover the fundamental principles of true religion, also appealed to Socrates’ religious beliefs to defend their case against the deists and orthodox Presbyterians. This included Andrew Ramsay (1686–1743), a Scottish Catholic convert who emigrated to France, became a close friend and biographer of Archbishop François Fénelon, served briefly as tutor to the young Prince Charles Edward Stuart (1720–88) at the exiled Jacobite court in Rome, and penned one of the best-selling works of eighteenth-century Europe.⁶⁶ Ramsay agreed that Socrates’ religious wisdom stemmed from revelation rather than rational inquiry. He was deeply troubled by the threat of deism and dedicated much of his literary career to defending the truth of revealed Christianity. Ramsay was convinced that the wise philosophers of all religious traditions in all ages had preserved some knowledge of the divine truths revealed to Noah, which had subsequently been propagated throughout the earth by his descendants. In his final work, *The Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion*, published posthumously in 1748, Ramsay collated extracts of this shared religious knowledge from the writings of pagan philosophers and poets throughout antiquity. He hoped that this

66 On Ramsay’s biography, see Henderson 1952; Eckert 2009. At least seventy editions of Ramsay’s best-seller, *The Travels of Cyrus* (1727)—a historical novel that related the moral, political, and religious education of the young Prince Cyrus II of Persia (590–530 BCE)—were printed in the eighteenth century alone. Originally published in French it was translated into English, German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, Swedish, Russian and Greek. For a comprehensive list of the *Cyrus* editions, see Eckert 2009, 787–9.

demonstration would serve as an important weapon against “Atheists, Deists, Free-thinkers and Minute-philosophers of all kinds,” who denied the veracity of the Bible:

if it can be proven from the records of the ancients, that the vestiges of the most sacred truths are to be found in all nations, ages, and religions, then I maintain, that the Mosaic history of the origin and propagation of mankind, can alone give a reasonable solution of this great phenomenon in the history of the human mind ... All depends then upon proving this uniformity and universality of religious sentiments in all places and times.

RAMSAY, *The Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion* 2.27

In his discussion of Socrates’ religious views, Ramsay praised the Athenian’s conversations on divine providence and the existence of God, and even went so far as to suggest that he had possessed some knowledge of the trinity.⁶⁷ He stressed that Socrates’ discovery of these truths derived from traditional knowledge that ultimately stemmed from divine revelation. Ramsay conjectured that Noah had recorded the fundamental religious truths he had received from God in hieroglyphics, which were universally acknowledged as “the first way of writing” (2.9). In Ramsay’s view, Socrates, like other “exalted pagan philosophers,” had been inspired by God to recognize the deeper meanings behind these symbols (2.20). According to Ramsay, Socrates formed part of a long line of wise philosophers who had passed on the truths of revealed religion throughout the generations, and that he had passed on his inherited knowledge to Plato:

He [Plato] got them [the great principles of religion] from Socrates, Socrates from Pythagoras, Pythagoras from the Egyptians, the Egyptians from Hermes Trismegistus, and Trismegistus from the first Hermes, who from a deep and serious enquiry will be found to be some Noevian, or perhaps antediluvian patriarch.

RAMSAY, *The Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion* 2.80

67 For Ramsay, Socrates’ appeal for the cock to be sacrificed to Asclepius was best explained as a dim understanding of a “middle God” who would save humanity (2.75–6); cf. Xen. *Mem.* 1.4.17–18.

Translating from Xenophon, Ramsay noted that Socrates himself had informed Aristodemus of the need for divine revelation to remove all his doubts relating to divine providence, and that he had counseled him to “ply yourself sincerely to worship God” so that “he will enlighten you, and all your doubts will soon be removed” (2.76; *Xen. Mem.* 1.4.18–19). For Ramsay, this passage “manifests a full perswasion that God alone can enlighten the soul by his supernatural influence” (2.76). For Ramsay, the history of Socrates’ religious beliefs and teachings proved the truth of the Bible and the importance of defending the necessity of revelation for religious enlightenment.

Ramsay sent drafts of his *Philosophical Principles* to Francis Hutcheson, who was similarly skeptical about the orthodox doctrine on natural religion.⁶⁸ Hutcheson’s own examinations of pagan beliefs in the immortality of the soul drew attention to Socrates’ inability to prove this doctrine definitively. As Hutcheson explained in his translation of the *Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*,

it was customary among the best philosophers, in imitation of Socrates, to speak upon this subject with such alternatives, even when they were persuaded that there would be a future existence. They thought this highly probable; and yet, as they had not full certainty, they suggested proper supports and consolations even upon the contrary supposition.

HUTCHESON 1742, 282⁶⁹

These enquiries supported Hutcheson’s claim that reason could only offer probable arguments for the existence of the afterlife, which contrasted with the sure guarantee provided by the Christian scriptures.⁷⁰

David Hume, though he did not seek to defend the authority of divine revelation, also presented the ideas of Socrates as a rebuttal of orthodox doctrine on natural religion. Seeking to defend his assertion of the severe limits of human reason against his orthodox detractors, Hume argued that, in contrast with the pious Athenian sage, it was by placing “too great a Confidence in mere human Reason” that the “various Tribes of Hereticks,” including the deists, had arisen.⁷¹

68 On Hutcheson’s response, see Ramsay’s letters to his friend John Stevenson, reprinted in Baldi 2002, 459–67.

69 For a modern edition, see Moore and Silverthorne 2008.

70 On this, and the implications of Hutcheson’s views on pagan religion for his evaluation of pagan moral philosophy, see Ahnert 2010, 58–61; 2014, 62–4.

71 Hume 1745, 21.

Intellectuals continued to appeal to Socrates' ideas to disprove the orthodox interpretation of natural religion in the final decades of the century. The philosopher thus features in the *Evidences of the Christian Religion* (1786) by James Beattie (1735–1803), Professor of Moral Philosophy and Logic at Marischal College.⁷² Beattie praised Xenophon's account of Socrates' opinion that "the gods grant extraordinary communications of wisdom to those to whom they are propitious" and praised his recommendation to Aristodemus to consult the oracles "in order to obtain from heaven such necessary or useful information as human reason was not of itself able to supply" (1.40–1; cf. *Xen. Mem.* 1.4.18–19). In Beattie's view, divine providence had allowed the pagan oracles to thrive for this very purpose: "to keep up in the minds of men a sense of the insufficiency of human reason, and to make them think, as Socrates did, that divine revelation was, at least, a desirable thing" (1.42). Like Campbell, Beattie argued that Socrates' beliefs in the immortality of the soul, divine providence, and a supreme deity were based on conjecture rather than rational conviction (1.24). This could be proved, he asserted, by the poor reception of these ideas by Socrates' contemporaries, which indicated that his arguments were never "accompanied with evidence or authority sufficient to raise the attention, or convince the understanding of any, except perhaps of a few speculative men" (1.25).

5 Conclusion

Socrates featured prominently in eighteenth-century debates over the precise relationship between reason and religion. For the Scottish *literati*, it was Socrates' religious beliefs that attracted the greatest historical interest. Socrates' theological views mattered most to those who denied that reason could discover and prove the fundamental principles of religion, namely the existence and attributes of God and the immortality of the soul. Orthodox Presbyterians of the Church of Scotland and the deists, although they held opposing views on the importance of divine revelation for attaining salvation and the full knowledge of God, agreed that unassisted human reason was able to discern these basic truths. For many heterodox Presbyterians, however, as well as other intellectuals who did not belong to the established Church of Scotland, their confidence in the ability of reason to discover these

72 On Beattie's use of Socrates to defend the importance of the Christian gospel as a support for morality, see Ahnert 2014, 91–2.

teachings was gravely misplaced. For these thinkers, Socrates' religious beliefs acquired new relevance and importance. As one who had never received the enlightenment of the gospel but had possessed extraordinary powers of reason, and who was reputed to have been the pagan philosopher who came closest to the truths of the Christian religion, Socrates offered a remarkable opportunity to test the scope and limits of human reason in the discovery of religion. Their interest in Socrates was thus profoundly historical and his utility in their critique of natural religion depended on a serious engagement with his ideas. The most rigorous and original contribution in this field was undoubtedly Archibald Campbell's *Necessity of Revelation*, which offered a comprehensive investigation of the rationale underpinning Socrates' religious beliefs and encouraged readers to engage in direct dialogue with his arguments. By demonstrating the perceived deficiencies in Socrates' arguments, Campbell was able to provide an innovative defense of the importance of divine revelation in the discovery of even the most fundamental religious truths. Yet, as we have seen, Campbell's historical methodology was shared by many other eighteenth-century Scots. By exploring the accounts of Socrates' religious ideas in the works of Xenophon and Plato, and the ways in which his teachings had been received by his contemporaries, Scottish intellectuals were able to mount a demonstration of the limited powers of human reason in the realm of religion.

The Scottish engagement with Socrates' religious thought thus draws our attention to forgotten aspects of Socratic reception in the Enlightenment. Though the philosopher's virtuous life and unjust death certainly allowed Socrates to serve as a malleable symbol for various competing causes, sincere engagement with his ideas also played a significant role in eighteenth-century debates. In Scotland, interest in Socrates was rooted in his attempt to discover the nature of God and the afterlife, as reported by his followers, rather than on his value as a general symbol of enlightenment, virtue, or the fight against superstition. His reputation as one of the greatest pagan sages—who had transformed the practice of philosophy by applying the powers of reason to ethics and had come closest to professing Christian doctrines—rendered his inability to provide convincing rational demonstrations of the principles of natural religion particularly compelling. The mythical Socrates held little appeal for Scottish intellectuals seeking to accumulate historical evidence against the flawed conception of natural religion presented by Presbyterian orthodoxy and deism. Their curiosity lay with the historic Socrates, whose conversations with his friends in Athens brought to light the unchanging relationship between human nature and religion in all ages.

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PART 6

The Nineteenth Century



Socrates in the Early Nineteenth Century, Become Young and Beautiful

Hayden W. Ausland

ταύτης τοι γενεῆς τε καὶ αἵματος εὐχομαι εἶναι



It has long been widely acknowledged that the modern estimate of Socrates' philosophical significance took a crucial turn with Friedrich Schleiermacher's compact but seminal essay of 1818. Less well known is the way this estimate was embedded in contemporary intellectual developments and extended or modified by a number of other writers whose views came to coalesce in a multi-faceted account—and then in a kind of conventional wisdom.¹ The present study aims to trace the development of the picture of Socrates and his philosophy that came into being during the first half of the nineteenth century, by reviewing the contributions of several key figures and noting the relation their conclusions bear to derivative styles or analogous hypotheses of today. It will emerge that several currently fashionable views remain essentially rooted in modern modes of thought proper to German *Wissenschaft*, romanticism, and philosophical idealism. That any such intellectual heritage is apt to becloud an accurate understanding of Socrates should go without saying. One may wonder how many scholars of today would wish to espouse a conventional view of Socrates, should they come to know the theoretical assumptions on which it is ultimately based. Quite generally, however, it seems at any rate an unsatisfactory state of affairs for serious students of Socrates to fall short of a self-knowledge to which he exhorted his companions.

1 In an authoritative collection of important studies of the historical Socrates, Patzer 1987 begins by reprinting Schleiermacher 1818 but then leaps forward to a study of 1894 by Paul Natorp, proceeding from there through a series of studies of the twentieth century. The secondary treatment in Seebeck 1947, aside from being hard to obtain, is spotty and cursory.

The modern scholarly estimate of Socrates has its origin in two distinct but closely related questions. The first of these is the problem in identifying the sources for accurate information about his philosophy, given that Socrates himself left no writings; the second is the question of the significance of this information for a history of philosophy in the modern sense. Pre-eighteenth century treatments of the philosophy of Socrates were normally eclectic in their use of sources, making little distinction between evidence found in works by Xenophon or Plato and statements or anecdotes scattered throughout the works of later writers.² In a history of philosophy whose title for the first time announced it as “critical” in method, Jacob Brucker identified Xenophon as having preserved a purer version of the thinking of his Socratic source, observing that Plato’s dialogues adulterate Socratic conversations not only with their author’s, but also with Pythagorean, Eleatic, and Heraclitean views.³ A preference for Xenophon then held sway until it was challenged early in the nineteenth century. This challenge was justified initially on the grounds that Plato had the acumen to appreciate Socrates’ philosophical side, whereas the more practically oriented Xenophon was insufficiently subtle for the purpose; it was before long reinforced by a new understanding of the historico-philosophical significance of Aristophanes. Simultaneously, late eighteenth-century systems of philosophy and related cultural movements came to be the measures by which earlier philosophical figures were assessed, occasioning a radical re-consideration of the evidence for their views. Socrates was one such case.

1 Preliminary Developments

The departure from Brucker’s view was conditioned by a revival of interest in Plato that began during the last third of the eighteenth century. The new interest had both critico-philological and philosophical elements.⁴ During the

2 A prominent example is Thomas Stanley, who collects and abridges Socrates’ metaphysical opinions “out of Plato, Xenophon, Plutarch and others” (1655, 8 [Latin tr. 1711, 116]). Georg Horn’s comparatively superficial account relies chiefly on Latin literary sources such as Horace and Juvenal (1655, 184–186).

3 Brucker 1742, 1.556; cf. Enfield 1819, 1.174 [1819, 1.100]. It is worth noting that the use of “history” in the titles of early histories of philosophy, which normally followed the ancient tradition of considering individual philosophers as falling within quasi-familial successions, did not signal a chronological treatment (cf. the use in “natural history”). Brucker’s addition of the term “critical” now did this, among other things.

4 These were complemented by a contemporaneous literary interest in Socrates falling beyond the scope of the present study. For an account of pertinent treatments by Johann August

1770s, Johann Friedrich Fischer issued heavily annotated philological editions of several Platonic dialogues. These reprinted the text of Estienne's edition of 1578, but included numerous reports of variant readings as well as occasional critical notes on philological points.⁵ Starting in 1778, Johann Friedrich Kleuker undertook to translate Plato's dialogues into German in a series of volumes. During 1781–86 editors at Zweibrücken issued in ten volumes the first complete edition of Plato's works (accordingly called the "Bipont Edition") to appear since the Frankfurt edition of 1602. In the last decade of the century, characteristically German secondary scholarship on the history of philosophy generally and Plato in particular got its start in the work of Wilhelm Gottfried Tennemann.⁶ It was in the wake of the general revival of interest in Plato and the history of philosophy that such efforts as these represented that Friedrich Schleiermacher in 1799 began translating Plato's dialogues anew. Schleiermacher's efforts were to have a success of the first order—not the least for some novel principles of interpretation he set forth in a general introduction to the first volume, to appear in 1804. By the end of the eighteenth century, the stage was set for what was to prove a sea-change in Platonic—and therewith also Socratic—studies.

In distinguishing the outlook of the nineteenth century from the background just mentioned, noteworthy first is the new light in which Joseph Socher presents Socratic philosophy in his *Grundriss der Geschichte der philosophischen Systemen von den Griechen bis auf Kant* (1802). Late eighteenth-century studies

Eberhard, Moses Mendelssohn, Johann Georg Hamann, and Christoph Martin Wieland, see Brenning 1899. For the influence of the figure of Socrates on Wieland in particular and the associated emulation of a Horatian-Socratic view of life, see Hertel 1921, 12–43.

- 5 In 1771, Fischer also reprinted separately Janus Cornarius' *Eclogae* from the latter's Latin translation of 1561, the earliest attempt at textual criticism of the Platonic dialogues. Fischer's own editions proved deficient in certain regards (see a contemporary review in Wyttenbach 1777), and would be superseded by the foundational works of Heindorf, Ast, Bekker, and Stallbaum in the early decades of the nineteenth century.
- 6 In 1791, Tennemann published a lengthy study of the Socratic philosophers' views on immortality; over the following three years, he produced the first modern monograph on Plato. Within the same time-frame an important study of the *Republic* appeared (Morgenstern 1794). The history of ancient philosophy also underwent renewal. Christoph Meiners had in 1782 published a history of ancient philosophy on a distinctive plan that claimed some attention, but in 1798 Tennemann began issuing a multi-volume history of philosophy that he would complete only in 1819. The second volume, which included a treatment of Socrates, appeared in 1799. Tennemann would in 1812 issue a more compact *Grundriss* that would be repeatedly reissued and updated by other writers after the author's death. A fifth edition served as the basis for Victor Cousin's translation into French (1829) and Arthur Johnson's English translation of 1832—which despite manifest faults (see a highly disparaging review in "M" 1832 and cf. Thirlwall 1833, 562–3), was reprinted as late as 1870.

(including Meiners 1782 and Tennemann 1799; see also Stapfer 1786) had still set forth the philosophy of Socrates in largely traditional terms. By contrast, Socher classifies Socrates in a systematic way, distinguishing him, Plato, and Aristotle as the philosophers of sound human understanding (*des gesunden Menschenverstandes*), of intellect (*der Vernunft*), and of understanding (*des Verstandes*) respectively—terminology evidently borrowed from German critical philosophy. A traditional approach still predominates, however, in Gustav Wiggers' chiefly biographical treatment of 1807, styled *Socrates as Man, Citizen, and Philosopher, or Attempt of a Characterization of Socrates*. An extensive central section presents a life of Socrates based on various sources. This is preceded by an introductory discussion of the problem of sources and its treatment in recent scholarship, being followed by Wiggers' judgments of Socrates in the three regards referred to in his title.

Wiggers maintains Brucker's view that Plato invests his character with many of his own views, so that Xenophon conveys the most accurate account of Socrates' teachings. He observes further that it is precisely Xenophon's innocence of metaphysical subtleties that ensures the purity of his reports.⁷ That Wiggers' approach would before long be generally regarded as outdated in Germany was presaged in contemporary notices of the book, one of which held his work to have brought important material together for the first time, while remaining pedestrian and uninspired in its execution and devoid of any new or solidly philosophical results.⁸

Under the first of his three headings, Wiggers finds Socrates to be a morally good man, if somewhat conceited and given to questionable relations with young men, appealing to Friedrich Schlegel for key observations necessary to explaining these, while rejecting Friedrich Plessing's reduction of Greek pederasty to "a hieroglyphic of metaphysical philosophy."⁹ In his life as a citizen, Socrates' relative lack of participation in Athenian political life is excused by pointing to his theoretical efforts to clarify such questions as the proper qualifications for rulership; here, Wiggers once again rejects a notion

7 Cf. Carus 1809, 517 (acknowledged in Wiggers' second edition).

8 Thus "P." 1808; see also "A" 1840. A particularly censorious reviewer took issue with Wiggers' reliance on Xenophon in preference to Plato as a source for information about Socrates ([anon.] 1807). A second "improved and extended" edition of his study included an indignant response to the last (1811, iii–vi and 4–5 n.), mentioning in passing a late exception to the traditional preference for Xenophon in some recent adherents of Schelling who take Socrates too as having espoused a kind of idealism (1811, 6–7 n.). Wiggers takes into account various works that appeared in recent decades; his second edition has the particular advantage of being able to appeal to the posthumously published *Ideen zur Geschichte der Philosophie* of Friedrich August Carus (1809), of whom he speaks with no little approval.

9 Wiggers 1811, 161–2, citing Schlegel 1797 and Plessing 1790.

put forward by Plessing, namely that he intended actively to undermine the existing Athenian political order.¹⁰ In regard to his role as a philosopher Wiggers considers two questions. The first is, “What did Socrates accomplish for philosophy as science? or, what did he effect through his philosophizing, so as to bring philosophy, or science of the absolute, into being?” Relying on Xenophon as his source, he describes a Socrates devoted to practical questions, proceeding to concur with Tennemann’s statement that he held basic propositions and convictions, but lacked a philosophical system in the proper sense.¹¹ Socrates’ philosophy will for this reason have lacked a thoroughgoing consistency or any idealism of the kind attributed to him by some recent writers.¹² His moral philosophy had rather a religious character seen in the teleological influence he accorded the divine, which determined in turn his views on such matters as immortality and the propriety of suicide. His was nevertheless a human-centered philosophy, for the sake of which he practiced an apt method relying on the premise that virtue could not be learned. Wiggers answers his second question—“Who was Socrates, as a philosopher?”—in terms flowing from these findings. Possessed of a sound understanding and exemplary self-control, he pursued his practical goals without seeking to raise himself to a higher scientific level by reasoning from principles or forming concepts, instead following a procedure at times tiring to a reader. In sum, Wiggers’ Socrates is a moral exemplar of excessive self-regard, a citizen in a higher sense with deficient devotion to the existing regime, and a practical philosopher of sound understanding but lacking any philosophical system.

In retrospect, Wiggers’ chief service was to bring together for the first time all the relevant evidence for an account of Socrates’ life, including its political circumstances, and to try to form an assessment of him against this background. In this way it provided an impetus to a re-assessment of a decidedly different character.¹³ Wiggers’ own views would never significantly influence continental scholarship on Socrates, although his biographical account for a time had a life of its own in England and America.¹⁴ But his endeavor to form

10 Wiggers 1811, 33 and 169, citing Plessing 1783.

11 Wiggers 1811, 181–3, where he approves Socher’s designation of Socrates as the philosopher *gesundes Menschenverstandes* only in a qualified form.

12 Wiggers 1811, 191, citing Steck 1805.

13 As an anonymous British reviewer would later put it, Wiggers’ treatment of Socrates’ philosophy “is immeasurably inferior to the ‘Essay’ [sc. of 1818] by Schleiermacher, although this would probably never have been written, if the other had not appeared” (anon. 1843, 331).

14 The central, biographical section alone of the second edition was later translated into English under the title *A Life of Socrates*, appearing in London (Wiggers 1840). The translation was then incorporated into several editions of Anthon’s Xenophon’s

an appreciation of the whole man remains a template for those inclined to come to know Socrates in this way.

The first systematic reassessment of Xenophon as a source for Socratic teachings came only a year after Wigger's second edition, in Ludolf Disson's treatise of 1812 on the "moral philosophy" transmitted in the *Memorabilia*. In addressing his subject, Disson begins from two connected premises: that a systematic moral philosophy is implicitly present in this work, even if it is not set forth as such; and that fundamental to any such philosophy is some position or other on the question of the highest good that is the end of human action.¹⁵ The first premise grants him considerable leeway in isolating elements of the moral philosophy he seeks to distill, while the second decidedly restricts his options for classifying it among the options he holds possible. Citing various places where Xenophon's Socrates speaks of virtue as the basis of the moral life, and opposing to these other passages in which Socrates speaks in terms of the "useful," "beneficial," or the like, Disson concludes that (a) to the extent the moral philosophy preserved in the *Memorabilia* presupposes a goal of enjoyment rather than virtue, it represents what amounts to a crass moral hedonism, and that (b) to the extent it more nobly holds up virtue as a guiding principle, it is fundamentally incoherent. In neither case, Disson holds, is it worthy of the Socrates who became a moral exemplar, so that Xenophon cannot be regarded as a trustworthy witness to his moral teaching. Both these assumptions impose upon a work by a classical master of rhetoric rigid schemata proper to Hellenistic times,¹⁶ and Disson's qualitative evaluation of the doctrinal structure he distills thereby depends on standards characteristic of, or even proper to, Christian or modern moral thinking.¹⁷ Disson remains a

Memorabilia, one of a series of school-texts of classical authors commonly in use in America during the mid-nineteenth century (Anthon 1848, 371–440, etc.).

- 15 In conceiving a Socratic moral teaching as necessarily founded on an identification of the greatest good, Disson had a precedent in Pauli 1714. The approach in Edwards 1773 is rather different, but was, as the author intuited, not apt to be influential.
- 16 For the deterioration of philosophy into doctrine in Hellenistic times, see Voegelin 1974, 36–43 [2000, 83–91]. The notion that a moral philosophy must begin with a problematic identification of a primary end of human action has been preserved via the works of Cicero (cf. *Fin.* 1.11–12 with *Div.* 2.1), which seem in the main to have followed a Hellenistic scheme formulated by his teacher Philo of Larissa (apud Stob. *Anth.* 2.7.2). Disson acknowledges that the terms of debate about ends were established explicitly first by the Stoics.
- 17 Intensifying some worries reflected in Wiggers, Disson finds particularly unworthy Socrates' apparent acceptance of lying in *Memorabilia* 4. (That Plato's Socrates does the same on the basis of a very similar argument in the *Hippias Minor* is left unmentioned.) An absolute moral prohibition on lying originates only with Augustine's *De mendacio* (395 CE), but Disson likely knows it in its secularized Kantian version. See notably the

paradigm for scholars who seek to distill a Socratic “moral theory” from the literary sources.

2 F. Schleiermacher and His Students

As the eighteenth century came to a close, the romantic movement and an idealistic conception of philosophy and its history took hold in Germany, as did a new kind of critical philology. Together, these would exert a powerful influence on the estimate of Socrates and his philosophical significance.

During the 1790s, Friedrich Schlegel grew close to Friedrich Schleiermacher, whose eventual undertaking to translate the dialogues seems to have been at his friend's urging.¹⁸ A series of volumes containing numerous of these appeared in the years 1804–1809, with each dialogue preceded by a critical introduction. The first volume also featured a general introduction, in which Schleiermacher set forth his novel theory of an orderly method by which Plato himself had preconceived and then written the entire series of his “genuine” dialogues.¹⁹ Schleiermacher's understanding of Plato is the result of a number of converging factors. Key aspects of it are perhaps most fully appreciated once one takes into account the broader historical situation within which it took place. Times in Europe were unsettled and Germany's national identity in doubt, circumstances that colored several prominent intellectual movements and systems of thought developed during the period. Having spent 1796–1802 in the midst of Berlin's romantic circle, in 1803 Schleiermacher took the position of University Preacher at Halle, which he held until 1806, when the region was overrun by Napoleon's troops. In 1809 Wilhelm von Humboldt established the University of Berlin. Schleiermacher served as Secretary of the Founding Committee, remaining until his death in 1834 as a Professor of Theology and a member of the Philosophical-Historical section of the Academy of Sciences. In 1818, a second edition of his translations appeared, to which he a decade later added a first volume of a third part containing translations of the *Republic*,

polemical work *Über ein vermeintes Recht aus Menschenliebe zu lügen* (1797), comparing the developed treatment by Augustine (*Contra mendacium*, 420 CE) in opposition to claims that that lying is permissible when exposing certain heretics. See the critical remarks on reading ancient philosophers in reliance on modern philosophy as an instrument already in Wytttenbach 1777, 29–30.

18 For an account of the two men's association and collaboration, see Asmuth 2006, 187–200.

19 As Leo Strauss, with characteristic precision, puts it, Schleiermacher thereby introduced the style of Platonic studies that is “based on the identification of the natural order of Platonic dialogues with the sequence of their elaboration” (1989, 67).

Timaeus, and *Critias*. Beyond this he did not get, but together his translations of Plato formed part of the establishment of a distinctly German style of “science” (*Wissenschaft*) as represented by the Academy in Berlin. A particular use of the term here pertinent will require some explanation.

The renewed interest in Plato already mentioned continued at an increased pace in the nineteenth century. Friedrich August Wolf had inaugurated a modern philological method for the study of the classics in his *Prolegomena to Homer* of 1795, which first posed what came to be called “The Homeric Question,” concerning the authorship of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.²⁰ A “science of antiquity” was thereby inaugurated, on the principles of which Wolf and then others would give regular lectures. Part of this discipline included an “encyclopedia of philology.”²¹ The most influential example of the genre proved to be a comprehensive *Encyclopedia and Methodology of the Philological Sciences* set forth by August Boeckh in his Berlin lectures from 1809 to 1865. These were edited and published only in 1877, after his death, but various of their governing principles inform his own publications. Thus for instance a method for determining whether a work is spurious is set out in his early study of the Platonic *Minos* (1807), which then formed a point of reference in his lectures on the encyclopedia.²² Wolf himself issued utilitarian editions of a few Platonic dialogues, but delegated to his student Immanuel Bekker the task of producing a full critical edition of the Platonic Corpus, which appeared in 1816–23.²³ Another edition of the dialogues prepared by Friedrich Ast (1819–29) appeared at roughly the same time, but was never competitive as a critical tool, since Bekker had for the first time taken the trouble to examine and collate numerous manuscripts of the dialogues.²⁴ Beginning in 1821, Gottfried

20 Wolf’s approach to the Greek classics enjoyed a model of sorts in Pentateuchal criticism deriving from Spinoza’s *Theological-Political Treatise*.

21 See Wolf 1831, first section, parts B. *Hermeneutik* and C. *Kritik*, comparing Wolf 1845, 161–200.

22 See Boeckh 1877, 218–20 [1886, 219–21]. The point fails to come across in Pritchard’s abridged translation.

23 Already during the first decade of the century several critical editions of small groups of dialogues had been judiciously annotated by Ludwig Heindorf, who passed away before extending his work.

24 Text and translation appeared 1816–18, with a separate apparatus criticus in 1823. Bekker’s critical work on the dialogues would be superseded only by Martin Schanz’s establishment of a stemma of their descent in the 1870’s. Bekker’s text was printed above Ficino’s translation in its original form, in which it had not appeared since 1522, after which various more or less incompetent attempts to “correct” or “improve” on Ficino’s Latin had appeared under his name—a matter of importance to textual critics, who regard Ficino as an independent witness to the tradition. Ast saw fit to compose his own translation, which some have regarded as the finest Latin Plato ever produced.

Stallbaum took up a task left unfinished by Ludwig Heindorf, of supplying the Platonic text with grammatical and thematic commentaries.²⁵ In 1822 Victor Cousin began issuing a translation of the dialogues, which, as “the French Schleiermacher,” has remained a classic of its kind. In 1826 Bekker’s critical edition was re-published in England, this time including extensive excerpts of previous commentary on the Platonic text, the sources of which ranged from Cornarius to Heindorf.²⁶ It is as part of the beginnings of such future developments that Schleiermacher’s translations and introductions need to be viewed.

While Schleiermacher’s versions remain to a significant extent unrivalled among German translations of Plato, it was his novel hypothesis that there was discoverable a definite and meaningful ordering of Plato’s dialogues that proved to have the greatest influence on studies of Plato—as well as on estimates of Socrates, which would shortly come to depend chiefly upon these. Since neither Plato himself nor the historical record mentions any such ordering, Schleiermacher had to base his inferences mainly upon evidence he took to be present within the dialogues. Schleiermacher arranged the dialogues he regarded as genuine²⁷ into three main groups. First came a series of “elementary” dialogues (*Phaedrus*, *Protagoras*, and *Parmenides*, along with other related pieces) containing a preliminary methodological inquiry into the logical character of ideas as the condition for knowledge. A second, intermediate group (*Theaetetus*, then *Sophist* and *Politicus*; finally *Phaedo* and *Philebus*, again with several lesser partners) he held to represent an epistemological phase in which ideas are related problematically to real things. This group was designed to bring into greater connection the theoretical and practical aspects left sharply divided in the elementary dialogues. These aspects were then wholly unified in the focal point of the entire series, the *Republic*, *Timaeus*, and *Critias* (with the *Laws* as a kind of appendix), which alone and finally offer a direct exposition in accordance with the categories of ethical and physical science. Plato’s dialogues so ordered for the first time revealed, Schleiermacher argued, a philosophical plan guided by the single leitmotiv of science, or *Wissenschaft* (Schleiermacher 1804, 44–52 [Engl. 1836: 40–47]).

25 Several of Stallbaum’s commentaries were later revised in second and third editions, with a few remaining the formal basis of several later commentaries, including Otto Apelt’s *Sophistes* of 1896. Stallbaum’s own judgment falls somewhat short of the standard set by Heindorf, who died prematurely in 1816.

26 See the appreciation in anon. 1829, which usefully reproduces a table of the authorities quoted.

27 The modern practice of athetizing numerous members of the *Corpus Platonicum* deemed unplatonic had begun already with Tennemann (1792–95).

The philosophical role accorded Socrates in different dialogues naturally varied somewhat according to the successive phases in Schleiermacher's general scheme, a detail that would eventually prove significant for K.F. Hermann's work several decades later. Impressed by the general picture that Plato conveys throughout the series, Schleiermacher himself was already by 1812 developing a radically new view of the historical Socrates in his lectures on the history of philosophy (see 1839, 81–6). Out of these reflections grew an academic lecture he delivered on July 27, 1815 entitled "The Value of Socrates as a Philosopher," which was subsequently published in the proceedings of the Berlin Academy for that year, and destined to influence profoundly the subsequent study of Socrates (1818 [1833]).

Schleiermacher premises as a problem the fact that the amiable preceptor we encounter in Xenophon and many later sources has been traditionally accorded so pivotal a role in re-orienting the history of philosophy. Since Plato shows us a more philosophically conversant Socrates, Schleiermacher comes to grips with the traditional problem by mediating the choice between Plato and Xenophon as sources for the historical Socrates. His subsequently canonical formulation runs as follows:

What can Socrates still have been, beside what Xenophon informs us about him, yet without contradicting the character-lines and practical maxims that Xenophon definitely establishes as Socratic, and what must he have been in order to have given Plato the inducement and right to exhibit him in his dialogues as he has done?

SCHLEIERMACHER 1833, 546–7 (1818: 59)

Schleiermacher arrives at a compromise that allows Xenophon his ethical preceptor but understands his teacher's quest for moral clarity as directed first and foremost at scientific definition, for which practical matters serve the purpose of illustration. Schleiermacher himself formulated a dialectical method for scientific purposes, and he understands Socratic dialectic accordingly: once a scientific focus is admitted as central to the character of Socrates, Xenophon's homely depiction of his teacher can be reconciled with Plato's comparatively philosophical portrait, and Socrates' own historical position can be understood. Almost all the conversations reported by Xenophon take the same basic form as those he describes as intended to make Socrates' interlocutors more dialectical (*Mem.* 4.6), a method confirmed as Socratic in Plato's *Phaedrus*; Schleiermacher concludes that what is common to both writers is a dialectician who uses a determinate method for the sake of securing knowledge.

In support of this estimate, Schleiermacher appeals in passing to the testimony of Aristotle, who while describing Plato's ideas in the *Metaphysics* notes that Socrates concerned himself with moral questions, thereby pioneering inductive arguments and general definition as significant contributions to theoretical philosophy (*Metaph.* A.6 987a29–b9 and M.4 1087b9–32). Schleiermacher is skeptical of a later claim that Socrates pursued definition with a view to “the ideas” (Aristocles apud Euseb. *Prep. evang.* 11.3) and observes that Plato sometimes uses poetic license to depict Socrates partaking in the later philosophical developments he himself inspired.²⁸

Less than a decade later, Schleiermacher's student Christian Brandis published an article entitled “Outlines of the Teaching of Socrates” in which he both modified and built on Schleiermacher's beginning. At the time, Brandis' chief scholarly activity was his text-critical work in support of Immanuel Bekker's forthcoming edition of Aristotle (1832), to which he would in 1836 contribute a fourth volume of “scholia”—in fact excerpts from various Greek commentaries on Aristotle's works that would only several decades later be published in full by the Prussian Academy.²⁹ Brandis was thus already immersed in Aristotelian ways of viewing the thoughts of other philosophers as he turned his attention to Socrates. Having first criticized earlier accounts and called his teacher Schleiermacher's approach path-breaking, Brandis set out to re-assess the traditional account of Socrates' moral philosophy. He did this by tracing it first through various Aristotelian testimonies, which he then employed as his touchstone for detecting Xenophon's misunderstandings, and Plato's extensions, of the historical Socrates' fundamental viewpoint.³⁰ Brandis sees Socrates' ethical concerns as fundamental, but again appeals to Aristotle's “dialectical” characterization in the *Metaphysics* (adding *Part. an.* 1.1). He adduces some more logically tinged descriptions of induction from Quintilian and Cicero and re-states Socrates' method in the terms of Aristotelian logic, allowing that is it difficult to establish the extent to which Socrates was himself conscious of this dimension. Brandis then argues that Xenophon and Plato both show Socrates using such a method for scientific purposes (1827, 141). Brandis in this way became the source for an Aristotelianizing assessment of

28 With this distinction, Schleiermacher planted the seed that would develop into a now familiar view that Plato's “early” Socrates speaks of “ideas” in the sense of “immanent universals” rather than “separate entities.”

29 Brandis had himself published an edition of both Theophrastus' and Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in 1823, for which he would issue a volume of scholia in 1837.

30 Aristotle's testimonies were later collected and discussed in Deman 1942, still the standard work on the subject.

Socrates as having contributed to progress in scientific method, a view still conventional in Anglo-American circles.³¹

3 G.W.F. Hegel and His Students

At the conclusion of his study of 1827, Brandis remarks that he has been induced to publish it by having seen two recent works toward whose general treatment of Socrates he finds himself in strong opposition. To understand properly these works and Brandis' reaction to them requires reviewing some related developments.

During the 1820s a significant new style emerged in the assessment of Socrates' philosophical character. This had a complex of causes, arising partly from a debate that had evolved over the previous century on the question whether Socrates had been accorded fair treatment in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, but more importantly out of the Hegelian manner of locating Socrates in a history of philosophy determined by the principles of a characteristically systematic *Geistesgeschichte*.

The earlier discussion was occasioned, in the context of a renewed interest in ancient comedy, by the ostensible problem of reconciling the figure brought on stage in the *Clouds* with the literary portrait passing under the same name in the works of Xenophon and Plato. Parties to it had divided mainly between two camps, one holding that Aristophanes—whether knowledgeably or not—had at any rate intended to depict Socrates as he was at the time the play was produced, the other claiming that the figure depicted in the play represented someone or something other than Socrates himself. The latter interpretation included claims ranging between the extremes of seeing Aristophanes as having meant to parody a particular sophist such as Protagoras, and holding that his character was intended to represent sophists or intellectuals as a general type. The former comprised both charitable views that Aristophanes had misunderstood Socrates' true character, and assessments of Socrates himself harder than those encouraged by Plato and Xenophon; these alternatives would on either side allow in due course for refinements according to which either Socrates, Aristophanes, or both will later have developed beyond their states

³¹ Brandis would later contribute an article in English to William Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* (Brandis 1849, s.v. "Socrates"), where he took essentially the same line. A measure of the durability of his interpretation can be seen in the way the Perseus Project has judged this very article of 1849 suitable to reproduce online as its chief source of information on Socrates.

of mind during the Archidamian war—perhaps by the dramatic date of Plato's *Symposium*, but at any rate by the time of Socrates' trial a quarter-century later.³² After Schleiermacher's compact treatise of 1818 had sharply posed a choice between seeing Socrates as a "mere" moralist, versus viewing his philosophical "contribution" as having been more in tune with modern imperatives, the task of rehabilitating Aristophanes' treatment of him took on a new coloring. As was already mentioned above, Ludolf Disen's study of 1812 aimed at discrediting as hedonistic a Socratic moral doctrine he distilled from Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. In making a case for this he mentioned in passing that certain features of both Plato's and Xenophon's portraits are present already in the Socrates of Aristophanes' *Clouds*. In 1825, prompted by certain published statements about this play and the character of Socrates, J.W. Süvern read before the Berlin Academy a study in which he examined both matters at some length. This was published the following year, so that, by the time Brandis was drawing his picture of Socrates from the testimonies of Aristotle, Süvern had concluded that Aristophanes' target was a comic type modeled on fifth-century sophists generally, having little or no resemblance to the historical Socrates.³³ These primarily historico-philological efforts together helped set the stage for a contemporaneous philosophical development.

By the mid-1820s, theoretical attempts to place Socrates in a history of philosophy constructed on modern philosophical principles had been already underway for over two decades. The approach in Socher 1802, mentioned above, reflected a previously established style of organizing the historical understanding of ancient philosophy in the terms proper to eighteenth-century German thought.³⁴ Not long afterward, Hegel presented his lectures on the history of philosophy for the first time at Jena (1805–6), doing so again in Heidelberg (1818–19) and then in Berlin from 1819 until

32 See a detailed account of the relevant developments in Süß 1911, 102–26. Today, full consideration of this question is complicated by the notion that the form in which we have the play dates from some time after the performance of a distinct and now lost original of 423. Dover 1968, lxxx–xcviii, argues at length for placing our play between 420 and 417, and holds that it treats Socrates more harshly than the original did. But see the skeptical arguments in Erbse 1969, to which no one seems yet to have offered an answer.

33 See Süvern 1826 and 1827 (Engl. 1833). For a more thorough examination of the indications leading to such a conclusion, see Erbse 1954.

34 The tendency is seen quite clearly in the first modern monograph on Plato, Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann's *System der platonischen Philosophie* (1792–95), which presented Plato's thought in Kantian terms. The same holds of the initial volumes of Tennemann's *Geschichte der Philosophie* (1798–1819) and his compendious *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie* (1812), in which he praises Socher, faulting only a lack of supporting bibliography (see the 2nd ed. 1816, vii).

his death in 1831. A version based upon Karl Ludwig Michelet's notes of the lectures of later years was published in 1833.³⁵ Here, in accordance with his over-arching scheme of a spiritual development, Hegel reportedly identified Socrates with a "subjectivity" opposed in principle to a certain "objectivity," namely "a different form of psychic consciousness, which makes up the substantiality of Athenian life, the world in which Socrates emerged."³⁶ The specific terminology for this opposition varied in later editions,³⁷ but already in the mid-1820s certain of his students had published sympathetic interpretations of related questions. One of these was Leopold Henning, whose *Principien der Ethik in historischer Entwicklung* (1824) characterized Socrates in decidedly Hegelian terms. In the following year, H. Theodor Röscher defended a PhD dissertation on Aristophanes (1825), elements of which were shortly elaborated in a subsequently influential book, *Aristophanes und sein Zeitalter*

- 35 In some loose correspondence with Hegel's interpretation may be counted the approach of Victor Cousin, who while deprived of his professorship by a Jesuit ascendancy in the early 1820s began a French translation of Plato's works (1822–40), but once restored in 1828 offered in Paris some lectures on the history of philosophy that drew considerable attention and promptly appeared in print (1828–29 [Engl. 1832]), several years before the posthumous publication of Hegel's own (1833). Cousin himself mentions that Schelling and Hegel attended these lectures. Cousin's periodization of ancient philosophy accords Socrates a pivotal historical role, but his picture of the man's philosophy remains in many respects traditional. On Cousin and his relation to German philosophy, see Hamilton 1829.
- 36 See Hegel 1833, 2.42–7 (1842, 39–43 [Engl. 1.1892, 384–8]). The phrase translated in the text above occurs in a summary statement at 2.120 as follows: *einer anderen Gestalt des geistigen Bewußtseyns, die das Substantielle des athenischen Lebens*. But see note 37 infra. Cf. further the programmatic statement in the general introduction: "The second stage in this universal principle (*auf dieser allgemeinen Grundlage*) is the gathering up of the determinations manifested thus, into ideal, concrete unity, in the mode of subjectivity (*das Zusammenfassen dieser so herausgesetzten Bestimmungen in ideelle, konkrete Einheit, in Weise der Subjektivität*). The first determinations as immediate, were still abstractions, but now the Absolute, as the endlessly self-determining Universal (*das Absolute, als das sich selbst bestimmende Allgemeine*), must furthermore be comprehended as active Thought, and not as the Universal in this determinate character (*als der tätige Gedanke, nicht als das Allgemeine in dieser Bestimmtheit*). Hence it is manifested as the totality of determinations and as concrete individuality (*als Totalität der Bestimmtheiten, als konkrete Einzelheit*). Thus, with the *νοῦς* of Anaxagoras, and still more with Socrates, there commences a subjective totality (*eine subjektive Totalität*) in which Thought (*das Denken*) grasps itself, and thinking activity (*die denkende Tätigkeit*) is the fundamental principle" (1833, 1.120–121, tr. Haldane 1.1892, 102).
- 37 In the second edition the quoted phrase is revised to read: *dem substantieller Geiste und der vorhandenen Gesinnung des Athenischen Volks* (1842, 100), which Haldane and Simson translate "the substantial spirit and the existing sentiments of the Athenian people" (1.1892, 444).

(1827). Rötischer's studies brought Hegel's historico-philosophical treatment of Socrates together with his teacher's views on the nature of comedy and Aristophanes' significance relative to it.³⁸ One result was to confirm in a newly philosophical sense the importance of the *Clouds* for a genuine estimate of Socrates' philosophical character. Henning's book and Rötischer's dissertation had caught Brandis' eye, prompting his article of 1827.³⁹ In his book, which appeared the same year as this article, Rötischer added an appendix critical of Brandis (Rötischer 1827, 383–400), who responded the next year with a detailed critique of Rötischer's thesis (Brandis 1828). Their antagonistic approaches set out the available options for an account of Socrates in Germany until they were in effect synthesized by Eduard Zeller.⁴⁰

Rötischer sees the *Clouds* as key to understanding Aristophanes, whose Socrates exhibits the subjectivity that rejects simple reliance on traditional norms of the kind Aristophanes depicts in opposition with newer intellectual styles in other plays as well. It is here important to appreciate that "subjectivity" in this connection denotes something quite distinct from the psychological idea now passing under the same name.⁴¹ Like Aristophanes' other principal characters, his Socrates is focused on his own moral sense, but not for the sake of leading the life of an idiot trapped in his own world. According to Rötischer, he means rather to submit "objective" traditions to a rational scrutiny originating in his own person, which then brings him into fundamental conflict with the unreflective norms of the state.

Although his book remained required reading into the second half of the century, influencing Søren Kierkegaard, among others,⁴² Rötischer published nothing further on the matter, while Brandis would incorporate his views about Socrates into the first and larger of two histories of ancient philosophy he would compose (1844). Only two years later, however, the eclectic Eduard

38 On Socrates, see Hegel 1833, 42–122 [1892, 384–448]; the corresponding view of comedy is set forth in Part 2 of his *Lectures on Aesthetics* III.iii.3.C.3.III.3.a (1965, 546–57). Rötischer's orientation was comparatively philological among those of a number of Hegel's students who developed his aesthetics in various ways. Mark W. Roche by way of example provides a useful synopsis of Rötischer's position (1998, 159–61 [cf. id. 2002, 413–14]). On Hegel's and Rötischer's place in a history of Aristophanic reception, see Süß 1911, 133–5, comparing Holtermann 2004, 109–17.

39 Brandis 1827, 150, comparing Henning 1824, 40–51 and Rötischer 1825, 41–7.

40 For the differences more generally on the history of philosophy between students of Schleiermacher and those of Hegel, see Scholtz 1979.

41 For the scholastic coinage, later critical and idealistic applications, and modern English deviations of these technical terms, see Hamilton 1829, 196–7 n. For an attempt to relate Hegel's Socratic principle to more recent social phenomena, see Lamb 1980, 46–52.

42 See Wilamowitz 1927, 4, and Thulstrup 2014, 232–3.

Zeller included elements of Schleiermacher's interpretation along with Hegel's developmental approach in the first edition of his history of Greek philosophy (1846). A significantly revised second edition appeared beginning in 1856 confirming the tendency under a new title. In 1862 Brandis produced a shorter version of his earlier history of philosophy, now styled along developmental lines as well, but his account of Socrates—like much else—remained substantially as before.⁴³ By mid-century, Heinrich Ritter's older account of the history of ancient philosophy had ceased to command attention, and Brandis' would before long accept the same fate (see Scholtz 1979, 308–311). Hegel's account would continue to have a life of its own among his followers. For scholarly purposes, however, it was thenceforth to be Zeller's second edition that would remain the definitive history of ancient philosophy, and, in its several revisions, influence scholars well into the twentieth century.

By its incorporation into Zeller's amalgamated account, Brandis' elaboration of Schleiermacher's account of Socrates came to be common currency among German scholars later in the century. Latent for a time in the first part of the twentieth century, it was resuscitated in the treatment accorded Socrates by Gregory Vlastos, from whose works numerous others have derived—with the difference, perhaps, that Vlastos himself was keenly aware of his sources. Similar holds of some other ideas about Socrates to be exposed below.⁴⁴

4 Ph. W. Van Heusde and P.W. Forchhammer

As the developments discussed above were underway in Germany and France, Philips Willem Van Heusde was working in Utrecht, pursuing critical-philological study of Plato rooted in the Dutch tradition of the previous century. Van Heusde is today all but forgotten by Platonic scholars. This is doubtless partly because he wrote his main scholarly works in Latin—mastery of which is unfortunately rare among students of Plato today—but is likely due more to the success of the German philological offensive his efforts eventually proved unequal to resist. During his lifetime, however, his principal work gained attention and exerted some influence.⁴⁵

43 Compare, for instance, Brandis 1862, 232–6 with his 1844, 49–59.

44 The author served as Vlastos' research assistant in preparing a summer 1978 seminar on Socrates funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

45 For its reception in England, one may compare Rogers 1848, in fact a stimulating short treatise aptly entitled "Literary genius of Plato. Character of Socrates" in its reissue of 1855. To date, unfortunately, no one has taken up the reviewer's suggestion that Van Heusde's work is eminently worthy of translation into English.

A tension between his methods and trends recently arisen in Germany can be seen already in August Boeckh's review of Van Heusde's 1803 doctoral dissertation, *Specimen Criticum in Platonem*. Boeckh finds Van Heusde's narrative of his own Platonic studies interesting enough, but holds his statement of method to be mainly of historical interest to Boeckh himself in showing how a Dutch scholar has by another route reached the point to which the greater circumspection and freer manner of philosophical reflection have in recent times brought the Germans. Boeckh cannot forbear to note how Van Heusde has taken nothing from German philologists, failing even to proceed in his work with a German *Geist*, "although we (sc. the Germans), reliant upon Dutch scholars, have in the last decades through a larger manner of treatment made such progress in the study of antiquity that they (sc. the Dutch) will finally, whether they wish to or not, have to learn from us."⁴⁶ Boeckh's grim prediction would eventually prove true, but not just yet. His review appeared at a time when later dominant trends in Germany were still taking shape, and Van Heusde's teacher Daniel Wyttenbach still exerted some authority among Europe's community of critical philologists. That European sources of such authority had shifted by the time that Röscher's and Brandis' treatments of Socrates appeared did not prevent Van Heusde from starting to issue a comprehensive treatise on Plato's philosophy that largely ignored by then established trends conditioning these second-generation scholars. His magnum opus, *Initia Philosophiae Platonicae* (1827–32; 2nd ed. 1842), finds its way through the complex of philosophical topics exposed in Plato's dialogues in accordance with "the three transcendentals" (truth, beauty, and justice) viewed as fundamental in the eighteenth century but found explicitly first in Ficino's fifteenth-century commentaries on Plato, doing so in a spirit akin to that of initiates entering upon a course of mysteries.⁴⁷

In a proem to the entire work, Van Heusde explains what "philosophy" in its fullness meant to Plato in fourth-century Athens, as distinct from its attenuated modern usage. To do this, he appeals to various passages in the dialogues featuring comparisons of philosophy with mystical or religious experience, noting that philosophical doctrines, and then systems of these, were subsequent developments. Van Heusde describes how the partly religious philosophical domain of Plato's day only later became fragmented between the Christian religion and the comparatively dry philosophy practiced in schools.

46 Boeckh 1809, 123–124. Contrast the dissertation supervisor's favorable review in Wyttenbach 1805.

47 The triad determines the structure underlying Kant's three critiques, among other modern phenomena. Cf. Ficino 1975, 79, 111, and 239.

Classical philosophy offered what a new religion later did, but Greek religion could not—at least to so wide a public: a moral education. It is thus a mistake to look for philosophy in the modern sense from Plato—a confusion of the narrow modern and broader ancient conceptions. For Plato in particular, entering upon “philosophy” meant something more akin to an initiation in the mysteries. Hence Van Heusde’s title, which employs *initia* where it might have used *principia*.⁴⁸

In the course of completing this elaborate work, Van Heusde also published in Dutch a series of letters on higher education meant to expose reforms he thought Holland’s educational system needed (1829).⁴⁹ Shortly afterward, he began issuing, again in Dutch, a systematic version of much of the material found in his *Initia*, in the form of a corresponding Socratic “Encyclopedia” (1834–39). He employs the Greek term here in its ancient sense of “basic educational curriculum,” rather than, as Boeckh did, with the distinctively modern meaning given it by enlightenment thinkers. Van Heusde’s encyclopedia had four parts, with somewhat confusing titles and numberings,⁵⁰ of which the first three were translated into German in two volumes (1838).⁵¹ In it Van Heusde follows out many of the pathways he explores more thoroughly in his *Initia Philosophiae Platonicae*. In the part on sciences, for instance, he tends in both works to follow the central books of the *Republic*, as supplemented with materials taken from other dialogues. His efforts in this vein are probably best regarded as being in response to contemporary developments in Germany.

Throughout these and several other occasional writings, Van Heusde treats Plato and Socrates as thinkers in essential continuity with each

48 Van Heusde mentions his choice of title at the conclusion of the preface (1827–36, 1.74 [1842, 42]). See a Dutch review of the first part of the work in Bake 1828.

49 The work ran into three further editions: 1829 again, 1835, and 1857, of which the revised edition of 1829 was promptly translated into German (*Briefe über die Natur und den Zweck des höheren Unterrichts*, 1830).

50 (General title) *De socratische school of wijsgeerte voor de negentiende eeuw* 1834 Deel 1: *De encyclopedie*. (Stuk 1) 1835 Deel 1: *De encyclopedie*. (Stuk 2) 1837 Deel 3: *Wijsgeerte: proeven van Wijsgeerige Navorschingen in de talen: ter beantwoording der vragen: Hoe komt de mensch tot waarheid? Hoe komt hij tot deugd? Hoe moeten wij eenmaal tot wijsheid komen?* 1839 Deel 4: *De Metaphysica*

51 *Die Socratische Schule oder Philosophie für das neunzehnte Jahrhundert: Die Encyclopädie: Probe philosophischer Nachforschungen über des Menschen Seelenvermögen und deren Harmonie zur Beantwortung der Frage: Welches ist die Verwandtschaft, welches die wechselseitige Verbindung aller Künste und Wissenschaft? and Philosophie: Versuche Philosophischer Forschungen in den Sprachen, zur Beantwortung der Fragen: “Wie gelangt der Mensch zur Wahrheit? Wie gelangt er zu Tugend? Wie sollen wir einst zu Weisheit gelangen?”*. There were also second and third Dutch editions of the entire Dutch original (1840–41 and 1860).

other. To scholars accustomed to twentieth-century assumptions, he will appear curiously oblivious to a still widely assumed hypothesis of a definite development in Plato's philosophical thought, but also uncritical of important differences between the philosophy Socrates inspired in Plato and other strains of thought attributable to the latter's interest in such things as Pythagoreanism. From this perspective, Van Heusde can seem like a vestige of what is called the "neoplatonic" interpretation of the dialogues. In fact, his general outlook is better characterized as humanistic in the tradition of figures like Erasmus and Grotius. This is signaled outwardly by the Ciceronian Latinity of his prose, but more importantly by the breadth of philosophical conception and the practical educational purpose for the sake of which he takes up the study of Socrates-Plato.

Van Heusde died unexpectedly in Switzerland in 1839, on his first trip south to Italy. The last work he completed, *Characterismi Principum Philosophorum Veterum Socratis Platonis Aristotelis, ad criticam philosophandi rationem commendendam*, was published in that year. In it Van Heusde accordingly sought, in a "critical" manner, to "characterize" (that is, outline in three-dimensional depth) the three principal Greek philosophers, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. In this book, he premises a distinction not readily apparent in his earlier work. Integral to a long habit of comparing Socrates to Jesus, a perspectival solution to the question of sources for the former had recently been suggested by analogy with the similar question of the four gospels. Like Matthew, Xenophon perceived a genuine, if basic dimension of his subject, whereas Plato, like John, could appreciate loftier dimensions of the man.⁵² Interested in this approach, Van Heusde begins by reviewing the way Socrates' philosophical nature is reported in the ancient tradition. Then, referring to Wytttenbach's Platonizing statement that Xenophon's Socrates is but an image of which Plato's is, at least in a formal sense, the original, Van Heusde finds the three-dimensional Socrates he is looking for in the description Plato puts in the mouth of Alcibiades in the *Symposium*. The section on Socrates is followed by a chapter devoted to the consideration of several questions arising out of Aristophanes' *Clouds*: the work's main intention, its use of Socrates as

52 See Tholuck 1837, 323–325. Of tangential interest is how the previous year saw the appearance in both Danish and German of a tragedy entitled *Sokrates* by the Danish dramatist Adam Oehlenschläger. For details, see Abma 1949, 22–28, whose summation wonders about a relation to Forchhammer's stillborn thesis of the following year (on which see below). Accompanied by several theoretical explanations of the supposedly tragic principles involved in the composition, the drama itself proved no great success. It might still, on the other hand, provide an instructive lesson in regard to many later attempts to fit Socrates into the Procrustean bed of a literary "hero."

its main character, the play's public appeal, the extent to which Aristophanes anticipates Socrates and Plato in certain views, and wherein the two last after a time parted company with him. Having addressed various difficulties inherent in these questions, he concludes by describing Socrates in his civic presence as a whole, which he designates by styling the man a "priest among the Athenians, of philosophy and of religion" (*philosophiae apud Athenienses et religionis vates*).⁵³

In Van Heusde's devotional expansion of an older and fuller view of Socrates as a model for mankind, one may discern the basis for the centrality of Socratic literature—most notably Plato—to humanistic discipline, as too for various uses of "Socratic" as applied to educational principles or instructional methods.

Two years before Van Heusde's *Characterismi* appeared, Peter Wilhelm Forchhammer had caused a stir with a short monograph entitled *The Athenians and Socrates: The Lawful and the Revolutionary* (1837). In a lively if not overly scholarly treatment, Forchhammer resuscitated another older tradition—but one of an opposite quality altogether. In what was itself a revival of an ancient sophistical phenomenon, a number of early eighteenth-century works had set out various accusations of Socrates' moral character tending to justify his treatment by the Athenians. A particularly forthright case is Dreisig (1738), the title of which (*De Socrate Iuste Damnato*) plainly heralds its thesis: that Socrates (sc. having been an opponent of the Athenian democracy) was justly condemned.⁵⁴ Forchhammer now revisited the topic in terms adapted to the nineteenth century, concluding that (a) Socrates was a revolutionary of the oligarchical faction of his time, so that the Athenians were entirely justified in condemning him to death, and Anytus and Meletus exemplary citizens in bringing him to justice; moreover, that (b) the sorry performance of Xenophon's defense is itself proof of Socrates' perverse efforts, while Plato's *Apology of Socrates* is but a rhetorical commonplace.

These stark claims elicited a storm of criticism in defense of Socrates. Possibly because its thesis in a way simplifies while radicalizing the Hegelian view of Socrates, Röttscher was one of the first to review the work (1838). That same year, a lengthier but comparatively diffuse reply written in Latin

53 Van Heusde 1839, 81. For an account of Heusde's life and work, see Rovers 1841.

54 Dreisig 1738, reprinted with several related works in Montuori 1981 (cf. his 1992, 79–100). Other works of the same era accused Socrates of dereliction of his duties toward his wife and children (Mentz 1716) and cowardice in facing his execution (Ibbeken 1735, answered by Müller 1738—for a synopsis of their debate in German, see anon. 1738). For Dreisig's condemnation of Socrates contrasted with Plessing's perspective (1893) on the question of Socrates' political leanings, see Böhm 1966, 190–199.

issued from Holland.⁵⁵ The following year produced further replies at length by Theodor Heinsius, whose case is more animated than scholarly, and Jakob Bendixen, whose remarkable essay treats Forchhammer's pamphlet as if it were a mysterious jest of some kind.⁵⁶ Less elaborate but more incisive in its criticisms is a review by Ludwig Preller (1838), who begins by noting that he has accepted Forchhammer's invitation to any opponent to talk the matter over with him in person, preferably "over a glass of wine with Spratt from Kiel" (1838, 89; see Forchhammer 1837, 92), but found his reaction to the work not the least altered thereby. He proceeds to subject Forchhammer's claims one after another to critical scrutiny, a task the more significant for the fact that he has had to direct it at a man for whom he feels no little respect and friendship; Preller ends accordingly, by issuing an open invitation to any better arguments there might be for such a thesis.

The tumult arising out of Forchhammer's intervention was severe, but soon subsided, and scholarship returned to its previous pathways.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, as a particularly outspoken instance of a perennial type of treatment of Socrates,⁵⁸ Forchhammer abides as a paradigm for scholars inclined to find fault with Socrates for falling short of gratuitous expectations of one kind or another.⁵⁹

5 K.F. Hermann

In considering the next stage it will be useful to call to mind a circumstance affecting studies since Schleiermacher's essay, namely his conclusion that a

55 Limburg-Brouwer 1838; cf. a Dutch review of both works in anon. 1839a.

56 Heinsius 1839 (reviewed along with Forchhammer 1837 and Brouwer 1838 in Sauppe 1839) and Bendixen 1839 (noticed in anon. 1839b and reviewed in anon. 1839c). See further a review of Forchhammer in anon. 1840.

57 By 1857, Cron will speak of Forchhammer's case as closed, while addressing the Hegelian dimension of the problem. See Keck 1861 for some criticisms of Cron.

58 That a scholarly response of this kind to Socrates must inevitable recur from time to time seems predictable from the differing way, as every teacher of the work realizes, Plato's *Apology of Socrates* strikes different kinds of readers—who are, after all, themselves acting as jurors of a kind. This is an effect of Plato's mimetic art. One may compare the gratuitous use made in Sanford 1820 of several statements taken from the "Preliminary Discourse" of Mitchell's first volume of translations of Aristophanes (1820, xvii–clx) in the course of his review of this work. No such tendency is visible in anon. 1821, a review of the following year, when Sanford's "outrageous attack on Socrates" was also sharply criticized in "M" 1821.

59 Thus, for example, idle questioning of Socrates' "political courage" in failing to protest the reduction of Scione in 421, conceived on the model of a "socially responsible" graduate student's decrying the Vietnam War.

credible estimate of Socrates' philosophical significance must distinguish the precise extent to which Plato's characterization is faithful to the original. This requires a general interpretation of the Platonic dialogues and their relation to the historical Socrates, and it is with the most influential such interpretation of modern times that we are to be concerned next, since it incidentally produced a key component of the view of Socrates conventional today. But in order to see clearly how it accomplished this, we must first understand the genesis and nature of this general interpretation of Plato.

In the same year Van Heusde's *Characterismi* appeared, the first part was published of K.F. Hermann's *Geschichte und System der platonischen Philosophie*, a work destined to transform radically the developmental study of Plato's dialogues instituted by Schleiermacher in 1804. Only this part, which contained the "historical-critical groundwork," ever appeared; a projected second part on the Platonic "system" seems never to have been written. In his dedicatory letter to Friedrich Creuzer—to whom Van Heusde too had dedicated his *Initia*—Hermann begins by characterizing his own work as "the reverse side, the side of sober criticism and research, to that (sc. Van Heusde's) work of artistic warmth and inspiration" (1839, v). Given his historical approach, as well as certain German antecedents to be exposed presently, the resulting estimate of Socrates' own philosophical role too was significantly new, in a way affecting future treatments of his significance for practical as well as for theoretical philosophy.

Hermann originated the scholarly fashion of speaking or thinking in terms of a "development" in Plato's thought, as distinct from his writings. Having accepted Schleiermacher's thesis that the whole of Plato's output depicts a lively, organic development, he finds unpersuasive that Plato can from the outset have fully foreseen the goal of this development. According to Hermann, external historical influences must have brought him only gradually to the plane he eventually occupied, so that the *dialectical* principles by which Schleiermacher understands the relations between the several dialogues in fact reflect Plato's own evolving experiences. If the dialogues are to show the mark of their author's spirit, then the variations they exhibit must bespeak stages in his own personal growth, which is a matter of greater depth than the pedagogic intention assumed as basic by Schleiermacher.

To restate this point in terms of nineteenth-century German thought, while Hermann follows Schleiermacher in viewing the dialogues as constituting a discoverable and meaningful series, he complicates this by following Friedrich Schlegel in holding that Plato's development was natural rather than deliberate, and G.W.F. Hegel in seeing it as necessary rather than casual. According to Hermann, Plato came under various influences, but his paradigmatically

Greek spirit developed in accordance with definite historical “moments.” There is, accordingly, an essential relation between Plato’s philosophy and a crucial turning point in history, which presented an impasse both practical and theoretical to which he offered his philosophy as a solution.

In explaining the nature of this historical turning point, Hermann appears to adapt the Fichtean category of “national cosmopolitanism,” a conception formed in 1804–8, a time noted above as having been one of great uncertainty for Germany. Briefly stated, the underlying idea has it that true cosmopolitanism is to be found in the patriotism of a nation whose character befits it as a model for the rest of the world, which is in turn understood as retarded in some way, and thus in need of regulation and perhaps even discipline by the special nation mentioned.⁶⁰

Hermann thus holds that Periclean Athens uniquely embodied “the idea of the state.” He understands Plato’s politically conservative response to her subsequent demise accordingly. On the theoretical side, earlier philosophies had mistaken what were only “moments of the concept” for “the absolute itself,” pointing to the need for a common principle as a defense against the “antinomies” to which each was individually subject. Plato succeeded in finding this, but his measures were again preservative rather than explorative of new solutions (1839, 13–37 and 132–137). His dialogues are the record of the process by which the Greek philosophical spirit came to be realized as a unity within Plato’s own mind, and thereby also document the final and absolute stage of the Greek people’s national spirit, with its paradigmatic human value, as well as its particular limitations. Plato’s philosophy is essentially historical in nature, according to Hermann, and his dialogues are developmental in a sense in accord with this fact. This is the idealistic side of Hermann’s interpretation. But the romantic influence also has important consequences for the way Hermann interprets the relationship of a given dialogue to the entire series. The “inconclusive” Socratic dialogues of ethical search are not to be regarded as “purposely” preparatory as part of a pedagogic scheme, but rather as signs that Plato was himself at a tentative stage in his philosophical development; a

60 This nation, naturally, was to be Germany. It is easy enough to see why such a view has been appropriated for pragmatic political ends in various later times. Thus, of the numerous passages illustrative of this idea and its formation, a number are conveniently excerpted for propagandistic purposes in *id.* 1943. For a general account of this strain in Fichte’s thought, see Windelband 1890. For its development in the first decade of the century, see Meineke 1970, 71–94, comparing Engelbrecht 1933 (esp. 72–100) and Kelly 1969, 248–68. The practical problem prompting Fichte’s thinking already troubled Herder; see Barnard 1965, 99–108.

constructive dialogue like the *Timaeus* shows the mature results of its author's researches.

Hermann's general hypothesis about Plato's development had already been aired in 1831, in the context of a review of Gottfried Stallbaum's annotated edition of the *Republic* (1829–30). In addition to the influential book of 1839 that grew out of this review, he would expand on certain aspects of it in a fuller version of his original argument in an essay styled "on the historical elements of the Platonic political ideal" (1849). As the second volume of Ritter's history of ancient philosophy appeared in 1830, however, he found himself confronted with an interpretation of Socrates' significance quite at odds with his own findings. He therefore did not wait for the entire work to appear before subjecting it to critical review, instead publishing a separate study critical of Ritter's presentation of "the Socratic system" (1833). Hermann had come to see the relationship of the sophists to Socrates and Plato in the light of the relation of the Enlightenment *philosophes* to thinkers of the Restoration. He moves to correct Ritter accordingly by relocating the sophists from the end of the first period of Greek philosophy to a primary position in the second period, alongside Socrates. But the Platonic Socrates' teaching on knowledge and ideas he presents as only one among a variety of responses on the part of other Socratics; Socrates himself will have made no claim to ideas as things' essences. Hermann thus finds Ritter too dependent on Schleiermacher in assuming an immediate relation between Socrates and Plato, attributing this oversight to his neglect of the "genetic development" of Plato's philosophical system (1833, 24–39).

What most profoundly characterizes Hermann's estimate of Socrates is his view of his significance within the realm of practical philosophy. This came about as a result of a literary question he sought to answer in regard to the *Republic*. As Hermann was reviewing Stallbaum's edition, the dual character of this dialogue had lately posed a problem for Schleiermacher in his introduction to his translation of this work (1828, 4–7 [Engl. 1836, 351–354]). Schleiermacher's conclusion had been that the work's Socrates had a Janus-like countenance, looking in one direction in Book 1 and another in Books 2–10. Explaining the "Socratic" Book 1 poses a greater problem for Hermann, since what Schleiermacher understood to be a view's negative preparation followed by its positive articulation, Hermann sees as two distinct views—so distinct that there can be no question of a gradual development.

In antiquity, when it was customary to identify a chief aim of every Platonic dialogue, a topical dilemma whether the aim of the *Republic* was ethical or political had been resolved by recognizing it as embodying a complex teaching applicable to individuals and communities alike. Hermann sees this

compromise as itself raising a further question: if the right political order is formally identical with the justice of the individual, but also with the cosmos, as we seem to learn from the *Timaeus*, then why does Plato establish his social organization on the scale of a single city rather than extending it to encompass the entirety of mankind?⁶¹ In a way again recalling Fichte's vision of German national destiny, Hermann holds that Plato envisages a mankind articulated into cities related via the subjection of the lesser to the greater in the same way as the different parts of the soul of a man, or the cosmos.

In stark contrast, Socrates' ideal of wisdom and virtue in principle excluded no one and was concerned with the laws of the city only as conditions for living the life of a "world-citizen." Plato, however, saw class distinctions as the only means by which partners with a lesser share in wisdom might participate at least indirectly, and so institutionalized this wisdom within the restricted compass of the traditional Greek *polis* (1849, 140–41). Plato's preference for conservative, Spartan institutions amounts to his insistence upon forcing the science developed through historical necessity back into the illiberal container of a moribund Hellenic provincialism. The city is thus fundamental to his project because he resists the cosmopolitan historical trends of his times. The *Republic* is not merely unrealistic, moreover, it is incoherent, since it seeks to subordinate a scientific development intertwined with a historical movement toward cosmopolitan individuality (represented by Socrates and the sophists) to Plato's own nostalgia for the aristocratic order of the traditional Greek *polis*. The work as a whole is a monument to the inevitable end of the Greek way of life under the pressures of scientific and historical progress. Hermann arrives at an ambiguous evaluation of Plato's political teaching. His endeavor was vitiated in principle by its futile resistance to the progress of history, but it also embodied a magnificent first step toward realizing the free and autonomous spirit that is the goal of that progress. Hermann thus views the *Republic* from the perspective of Hegelian Idealism according to which the shortcomings of what comes earlier in a historical sense are seen to be nullified by means of their assimilation as moments into a subsequent and more perfect whole (1839, 542–543; see Hegel 1833, 269–73 and 293–4 [1892, 2.90–9 and 112–14]).

Hermann sees the relation between Socrates' and Plato's practical teachings in the light of the theoretical difference between Socratic "conceptualism" and the Platonic "doctrine of ideas," as distinguished by Brandis in reliance upon Aristotle. Socrates' conceptual activity points historically forward, while

61 Hermann 1849, 134–7. The question had recently been raised again, as Rettig 1845 proposed a primarily ethical interpretation of the *Republic*, as against a political reading going back to Morgenstern's essay of 1794, to which work Hermann refers several times.

Plato's metaphysical speculation represents a regression following it. Plato's idealism is thus the theoretical analogue of his narrowly nationalistic, and aristocratic, political bias, and Socrates' empiricism correspondingly answers to his openness in practical questions. Plato's ideas are the deductive basis for his reactionary institutional measures, as Socrates' inductive method of conceptual formation had been the foundation of his own cosmopolitan lifestyle. The figure restoring the historically appropriate movement is then Aristotle, whose method proceeds deductively from axioms first established by inductive means; his politics are likewise liberal in character, representing the practical application of principles arrived at through experience (1839, 132–133). According to Hermann, then, the difference between the Socratic “concept” of justice in Book 1 of the *Republic* and the Platonic “ideal” based upon the hierarchical division of the body politic into differing strata in Book 4 is no less than the difference between distinct moments in a political and philosophical *Geistesgeschichte*. The Socratic determination of justice leaves its acquisition open to anyone, thus accounting for its primarily ethical orientation; the Platonic comparison of the well organized individual (or world-) soul with the closed society of the traditionally constituted Greek *polis* is historically conservative, limiting the breadth of the concept's application in all its spheres, most significantly in the ecumenical. This is why the Socratic view cannot properly prepare for the Platonic, as Schleiermacher thought: their true relation as historically revealed shows them to be opposed to each other.

Hermann associates the Schleiermacher-Brandis picture of Socrates as making a step forward in scientific progress that would be set back temporarily by Plato's doctrine of ideas, with a political assessment by which he embodies a forward-looking cosmopolitan principle from which Plato recoils in regressive conservatism. The composite story, its dependence on so many strains of thought peculiar to nineteenth-century Germany notwithstanding, remains one widely accepted view of Socrates' philosophical significance today. Perhaps a date two centuries after the institution of the approach that has led to this state of affairs is an apt time to begin its fundamental reconsideration.

With Hermann's re-statement of 1849, the works to be reviewed in this study come to an end.⁶² The date is not arbitrary. While the study of Socrates proceeded apace in the century's second half, it tended either to re-state or elaborate on views that have been outlined above. To recapitulate, against the

62 Useful reviews of some of the literature discussed above can be found in Zeller 1859 [Engl. 1868]; Hurdall 1853; Ribbing 1870; Labriola 1871.

background of an eighteenth-century image of Socrates as a moralist in line with Xenophon's account:

1. Friedrich Schleiermacher re-cast the traditional question of sources so as to admit of a picture compounded out of Xenophon's seemingly less, and Plato's ostensibly more, philosophical teachers; Schleiermacher's account shows the influence of the German romantic movement, but more importantly contemporary ideas about scientific method. His student Christian Brandis extended his reliance upon the testimony of Aristotle to matters of ethical import, thereby composing the foundational view of Socrates still regnant today.
2. Scholarly readings of the plays of Aristophanes, more particularly of the *Clouds*, tended to confront the speculations of Schleiermacher's school in a manner conducive to Theodor Röscher's airing a Hegelian view, according to which Socrates represents a principle of rational subjectivity opposed to the unquestioning acceptance of the traditions on which the city is founded. This trend not only introduced the testimony of Aristophanes into the question of sources, but also set out a clear alternative to Brandis' conclusions, an opposition to be settled only by the synthesis effected by Eduard Zeller in his still today fundamental history of ancient philosophy.
3. The incipient compromise was shortly to be thrown into relief in two unrelated ways, as an attempt of Philips W. Van Heusde to elaborate on the deeper appreciation embedded in the Western humanistic tradition gained at best limited attention, while Peter Forchhammer's unmeasured scholarly adaptation of charges made by Socrates' ancient accusers met with no noticeable approval. Socrates, it seemed, must rest somewhere in between these two images.
4. Karl Friedrich Hermann sought to identify Socrates more precisely in a way ancillary to a romantic-idealistic hypothesis about Plato's intellectual development. The thought of Socrates is in fact the background necessary for understanding Plato's—like Athens' after its loss of Pericles—magnificent failure to see the general principle informing a true moral and political understanding. As with his more economical and realistic scientific method, so too in his forward-looking cosmopolitanism Socrates represented the progressive insight in reaction to which Plato's idealism—metaphysical and political alike—assumed form.

In certain ways, the understanding of Socrates in 1850 has not changed through the twentieth century and into the present one, and it has been with a view to constructing and preserving an appreciation of the origins of several still living, if somewhat infirm, traditions that this curious history is offered to the reader.

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Astonished Thought: Friedrich Schlegel's Appropriation of Socratic Irony

Samuel Frederick

Right now *Socrates* is even more important to me than Kant.

FRIEDRICH SCHLEGEL, letter dated 21 June, 1796¹



For Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), classical philologist, poet, and theorist of early German Romanticism, Socrates transcends the position so often accorded him as foundational thinker of antiquity.² In his view, the Greek philosopher does not just stand at the origin of the Western philosophical tradition or—as that tradition’s common touchstone—provide continuity from this past to the present; he also has immediate relevance for the way contemporary philosophy conceives of its task going forward. From Schlegel’s highly idiosyncratic perspective, Socrates at once shares the radical skepticism that the German thinker insists is required in the wake of Kant, Jacobi, Reinhold, and Fichte, while also modeling behavior—in the form of irony—for overcoming the

1 Addressed to Karl August Böttiger (Schlegel 1958, 23.316). Henceforth Schlegel 1958 is cited as KFSA, followed by volume number and page number. When no English source is cited, as here, the translation is mine.

2 The importance of Plato’s works for Schlegel cannot be overstated. In his 1827 lectures in Vienna, Schlegel attributes to these works his abiding preoccupation with questions of philosophy: “It has now been 39 years since I read with indescribable intellectual curiosity the complete writings of Plato in Greek for the first time; and since then ... this philosophical inquiry has always been for me my actual main concern” (KFSA 10, 179–80). For a thorough account of Schlegel’s work on ancient philology in relation to his poetics and philosophy, see Messlin 2011. On Schlegel’s reception of Plato, specifically (though with little to no mention of Socrates), see Krämer 1988; Frischmann 2001; Krause 2002. Krämer is critical of Schlegel’s ahistorical reading (he calls it “anachronistic and problematic” [609] as well as “historically inadequate” [585]); Frischmann and Krause each attempt to rescue Schlegel from this charge.

dilemma such skepticism occasions. Thus, in Schlegel's appropriation of him, Socrates holds the key to philosophy's future.³

The dilemma of skepticism, as Schlegel conceives of it, originates in a rejection of first principles.⁴ Schlegel denies that there is a determinable ground or criterion for knowledge, since any such ground or criterion would necessitate a further one—*ad infinitum*.⁵ This conviction informs one of Schlegel's fundamental presuppositions, which was shared by a number of early Romantics: *absolute knowledge will forever elude us*. Such knowledge is "absolute" because it is free of limitations. Schlegel refers to "the absolute" as that which is completely unconditional (KFSA 12, 4), amounting to a unity of thought and being or of subject and object.⁶ The dilemma, as Schlegel views it, is that the inaccessibility of the absolute does not eliminate our persistent desire for it. It is and remains an essential attribute of humans as thinking beings to strive for the absolute, always seeking those principles which would fully ground our knowledge, always seeking to transcend our finite limitations. Schlegel's radical twist is to embrace this condition—falling short of the absolute coupled with the ineluctable desire for it—as something positive, indeed productive. In this way Schlegel distinguishes himself both from Kant, who defined the limits of knowledge as necessary (and desirable) for establishing the parameters within which reason can operate, as well as from Hegel, who maintained that the absolute was epistemically accessible to reason. Schlegel sees the absolute as both infinite and unknowable, and yet *as such* vital to human life. For while he recognizes the impossibility of ever fully reaching it, the perpetual play of striving-for-yet-never-arriving is not, he maintains, a lamentable, Sisyphean condition.⁷ Rather, it allows for the

3 Schlegel's impact, in turn, on our present (his future) is also worth noting. For his influence on twentieth-century literary theory, see Benjamin 1996; Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1988. On Schlegel as a precursor to the "postmodern" thought of de Man, Derrida, Rorty, among others, see Behler 1990. On Schlegel's relevance to contemporary analytic philosophy, see Bowie 1996, who writes "that the Romantic positions are, some two hundred years after their emergence, still philosophically alive and worth bringing into contemporary debate, even apart from their intrinsic historical interest" (516).

4 See Nassar 2014, 89–97.

5 "Every concept, every proof, every proposition is infinitely perfectible" (KFSA 18, 518). See also KFSA 2, 72.

6 Millán-Zaibert 2007, 32–3. On the concept of "the absolute" in Schlegel and early German Romanticism, see Frank 2004, 24; Nassar 2014, 1–12; and Schulte-Sasse 1997, 22–25, who links "the absolute" to "the infinite."

7 "Kant introduced the concept of the negative into philosophy. Wouldn't it be worthwhile trying now to introduce the concept of the positive into philosophy as well?" (Schlegel 1971, 161; KFSA 2, 166). English translations from Schlegel 1971 henceforth cited as LF.

essential creative participation in an existence that is forever in flux, forever in a dynamic state of becoming. That creative participation is art itself.⁸

Schlegel uses an existing term to designate this perpetual striving for the absolute that comes up against the limitations of human knowing ("finitude"), is rebuffed, and then leads to the self-reflective play of *poesis* (the creation of artworks). That term is *irony*, a concept that he first introduces in his fragments from the late eighteenth century⁹ and returns to throughout his career, often by appealing directly to Socrates. Indeed, Schlegel's notion of irony owes its radicality in large part to being modeled on the figure of Socrates, whom the German thinker identifies as epitomizing anti-systematic skepticism. By developing irony with the Greek philosopher as inspiration, Schlegel introduces what Ernst Behler calls "a fundamental change" in the history of this concept,¹⁰ transforming what in the eighteenth century was used exclusively as a rhetorical figure into a philosophical idea, one that nonetheless still contains traces of its rhetorical meaning (communicating something by means of its opposite) in the emphasis placed on paradox.¹¹ Armed with a notion of irony imbued with both radical skepticism and paradox, Schlegel looks backward and forward at once. As he writes in a lecture near the end of his life:

I must, however, call to mind, that according to the modern usage, this word [sc. irony] has fallen some levels down from its original meaning and is often taken in such a way as only to mean ordinary ridicule. In its original Socratic sense, however ... irony indicates nothing other than this astonishment of the thinking mind about itself, which often dissolves into a gentle smile.

KFSA 10, 352–3

As this late reflection on irony makes clear, Schlegel sees his appropriation of Socratic irony not as what Behler identifies as a "new understanding" or

8 A useful contrast can be found in Schlegel's contemporary Heinrich von Kleist (1777–1811), who despaired upon reading Kant, whose limits on reason Kleist understood as denying reliable knowledge, foreclosing access to truth, and generally leading to a picture of reality as illusory. Kleist eventually committed suicide.

9 These were aphoristic works characterized by cryptic, paradoxical, and whimsical expression. Intentionally "incomplete," they were not meant to form a unified system of thought. Schlegel's most important fragments were published in the journal *Lyceum* (1797) and in the journal *Athenäum* (1798–1800), which was co-edited with his brother August Wilhelm.

10 Behler 1988, 47.

11 In the fragments on literature Schlegel writes: "*Paradox* is the *conditio sine qua non* of irony" (KFSA 16, 174).

“redefinition”¹² of the concept so much as a return to its “original meaning,” a recuperation of the “original Socratic sense” of the term.¹³ Yet the concept is recharged with philosophical power that Schlegel then mobilizes for his own intervention in the debates of present-day German Idealism and for his reconceptualization of the task of literature and philosophy for the future. Irony in its “Socratic sense” allows Schlegel to overcome the dilemma of skepticism by affirming the state of perpetual striving while also maintaining his fundamental skeptical conviction that this striving cannot be fulfilled. Irony thus reconciles Schlegel to the fact of his ultimate ignorance in a way that is also highly productive. It generates a dynamic, escalating self-reflexivity that feeds creativity and that also, in its most heightened form, triggers, as he says in these late lectures, “astonishment.” This is an astonishment of thinking in relation to itself, an astonishment that ultimately also signals a short-circuiting of thought, leading to its suspension, which is both a cessation of thinking and a continued “hovering” in the realm of play that thinking naturally generates. As I aim to show at the end of this chapter, it is here that Schlegel’s conception of irony ultimately dovetails with Socratic ignorance as the culmination of thinking that coincides with a denial of any stable objects of thought.¹⁴ The “astonished” recognition of thinking about itself affirms itself in its negativity as a necessary means of “raising” itself “to a higher power” (*potenzieren*) (LF, 175; KFSa 2, 182).¹⁵

1 Socrates in Schlegel’s Cologne Lectures

Before we look more closely at the paradoxical structure of this “astonished thought,” as he calls it in his 1828–9 Dresden lectures, we should first turn to the writings on Socrates that Schlegel includes in his 1804–6 Cologne lectures on the history of philosophy and on logic. Here we get a rather more conventional depiction of the Greek philosopher, as the occasion and format

12 Behler 1988, 48, 49.

13 Cf. Behler 1990, 82. As we will see in §2, Schlegel understood Socratic irony in a sense that, as Lane (2006, 77–80) has shown, comes from Aristotle more than from the Platonic dialogues. In this (for Lane, erroneous) view, the ironist is the self-deprecator who “disavow[s] or downplay[s] qualities [he] actually possesses” (79).

14 For a related but ultimately quite distinct interpretation of Socratic ignorance, see Layne 2018, who shows how the Neoplatonic thinker Proclus accepted both Socrates’ claim to ignorance and his knowledge—without appealing to irony.

15 See KFSa 18, 402, where Schlegel lists “raising to a higher power” (*Potenzieren*) alongside “irony” as a key element of Platonic thought.

of the private lecture demands. Still, Schlegel's picture of Socrates contains important details that betray a more idiosyncratic reception, one that echoes his pronouncements in the fragments and other writings from the Jena period (1796–1800), where Socrates stands in for the inspiration (if not originator) of Romantic irony.¹⁶

In the first part of *The Development of Philosophy*, a chronological lecture survey of the history of philosophy, Schlegel devotes an entire section to Socrates, whom he singles out for two interrelated achievements: 1) his refusal to establish a system, and 2) his radical skepticism. Each is intimately connected to Schlegel's own philosophical program,¹⁷ and each is essential to understanding the position he accords Socrates in conceptualizing Romantic irony. In laying out his discussion in these lectures I will also draw on the passages on Socrates from Schlegel's lectures on logic from the following year.

Schlegel stresses from the outset that "Socrates was no founder of sects," by which he means that he was "no teacher in the sense of the word used at the time." As Schlegel explains, Socrates

did not want to impose his convictions as unquestioned oracles on others, did not want to establish a system as absolutely complete knowledge (*absolut vollendete Erkenntnis*): rather, he wanted only to guide others onto the path on which they might, through earnest study and striving (*Forschen und Streben*), ultimately arrive at knowledge of the highest truth ...

KFSA 12, 198

16 I follow Benjamin (1996) and Nassar (2014, 87–88)—but not Behler (1988, 46) or Frischmann (2001, 83)—in treating Schlegel's post-Jena works alongside his earlier fragments and essays. Although his later writings reveal a shift in emphasis as he turns away from Romanticism and eventually toward Catholicism (he converted in 1808), I find Schlegel's commentaries on Socrates from the Cologne and even later Dresden years to be helpful in untangling his earlier conception of irony. Strohschneider-Kohrs (1960, 86) writes that in the late Dresden lectures Schlegel "returns to the philosophical, foundational definition of his thoughts on irony."

17 Nassar 2014, 82: "Schlegel never developed a system and was highly skeptical of the methods and goals of his philosophical contemporaries"; see also 95–6 on Schlegel's critique of Fichte's systematic thinking. Cf. Rush 2016, 85, for whom Schlegel adheres to "a *kind of system* in which the elusiveness of the absolute is present as a formal, structuring principle. Such systems are open-ended and ever changing but, nonetheless, can claim their own kind of integrity." On Schlegel's skepticism, see Millán-Zaibert 2007, 48–9. On Schlegel's reading of Plato as an anti-systematic philosopher, see Krämer 1988, 605–6.

In Schlegel's view, Socrates did not maintain that these highest truths lie beyond this world; rather, they exist as "ideas that slumber inside us" and need to be brought forth clearly to "consciousness." Socrates was therefore engaged in "powerfully motivating ... the true intellectual (*geistig*) life to the activities of independent thinking, study, and questioning." Schlegel thus presents Socrates as a philosopher whose primary task was not to teach any concrete truths but to instruct others in mobilizing their own intellect to think for themselves. Such independent thinking, which is "nothing other than a continual inner self-dialogue" (KFSA 13, 204), as Schlegel writes in the lectures on logic, is "the actual form of all philosophy" (KFSA 13, 205). Socrates succeeded in cultivating such thinking without "compromising the originality" of individuals; he thus avoided "limiting and crippling" their "original power of thought (*ursprüngliche Denkkraft*) through [his own] authority" (KFSA 12, 198). It is for this reason, Schlegel suggests, that Socrates did not write anything: to prevent his instruction from being dogmatically taken as authority, which would have the effect of impeding independent thinking. It follows that "his actual teaching (*Lehre*) cannot be defined as a system" (KFSA 12, 199). "The philosophy of Socrates," Schlegel writes in the lectures on logic, "was actually not a closed and complete system, but rather was far more a constantly progressive philosophizing (*stets fortschreitendes Philosophieren*), an untiring study of and striving for (*Forschen und Streben*) truth and certainty, a methodical formation (*Bilden*) and perfection of thinking and reflection" (KFSA 13, 205).

Schlegel continues in his lectures on the history of philosophy by defending Socrates from the imputation—encouraged by Xenophon's defense of him against the charge of extravagant cosmological theorizing (*Mem.* 1.1.10–15)—that he be considered among the "lowly empiricists," "insofar as he restricted all human thinking to the sphere of the practical, to knowledge of mankind's inner life (*Kenntnis des innern Menschen*), and indeed only insofar as this knowledge is useful for practical-moral ends" (KFSA 12, 200 and 199). "Taken philosophically," Schlegel goes on, such a view would be "an illusion":

He was not only the most rigorous teacher of virtues, but rather also at the same time an upright worshipper of the gods; *his teachings of an understanding, benevolent godhead who rules over the world—of the absolutely unconditional, self-sufficient Good and Beautiful* are in no way reconcilable with the empiricism that prevailed at the time.

KFSA 12, 200

Just because Socrates "limited his investigations more to the observation of the utility (*Zweckmäßigkeit*) of the world and the relation of this concept

to morality" does not mean he ruled out the existence of a "divine intellect" (*einen göttlichen Verstand*) that created and rules over the world. This "divine intellect" is the "*highest power*" both in mankind and in the world (KFSA 12, 201). It is clear from these remarks that Schlegel is at pains to rescue a sense of the absolute in Socrates' "teaching," to drive home that his pragmatic-moral philosophy still strived for something above and beyond this world, that knowledge of oneself is more than just the self-conscious power to think critically, but that it puts the individual on the path to something greater.

This interpretation emerges more fully in Schlegel's discussion of Socrates' second main contribution to philosophy, which is his radical skepticism:

Socrates' skepticism is of the highest, in no way reprehensible kind; it distinguishes itself from all earlier skepticisms of the Greeks, and deserves to be designated, on the most select level, as philosophical skepticism. If philosophy is more a *seeking* (Suchen) for a complete scientific knowledge of the infinite (*der vollendeten Wissenschaft des Unendlichen*) than this knowledge itself, then it follows that the earnest striving (*Streben*) for it, rather than the brash claim already to have found it, better corresponds to mankind's endeavor; thus, next to the *overhasty boldness* of other philosophers, Socrates' wise humility appears in the most glowing light.

KFSA 12, 201–2

In this passage Schlegel identifies that greater something towards which a philosophy not limited to "practical life wisdom" (KFSA 12, 200) or "the concept of morality" (KFSA 12, 201) must strive: "the infinite." And yet because a "complete" knowledge of this infinite is, by virtue of the limitations of human cognition, impossible, the only adequate means of "seeking" it is through a fundamentally "progressive" mode of philosophizing (KFSA 13, 205), which always moves toward but never arrives at a goal. In Schlegel's view, Socrates accepted and drew attention to the fact that the "complete possession" of the "knowledge of truth" is an "illusory idea." In this he was a true skeptic. Socrates furthermore demonstrated that those who claimed to have achieved such complete knowledge were in fact "being held back" from participating in the "constantly progressive" activity of "striving" (*immer weiter fortschreitenden Streben*) (KFSA 13, 207) that ultimately also makes possible "a finite approach (*eine endliche Annäherung*) to the sanctuary of truth" (KFSA 13, 207). This "serious seeking (*Suchen*)" (KFSA 12, 202), Schlegel stresses, is what distinguishes Socrates' skepticism from the "baser" skepticisms of the Greek philosopher's contemporaries, the sophists. Schlegel writes that the sophists'

skepticism consists of “the denigration of all truth and certainty” in the absence of any positive striving (KFSA 12, 202). Socrates’ singular skepticism, by contrast, emboldens the individual to the continued activity of “serious seeking” and “independent thinking” (KFSA 12, 202) by indicating “the infinite magnitude” and “inexhaustible abundance and multiplicity” of “objects of knowledge” (KFSA 13, 207). Socrates’ skepticism, in Schlegel’s view, thus involves an embrace of finitude in the face of the infinite as an impetus to the earnest exercise of thought, which, ever in motion and never fully exhausted, perpetually approaches but always falls short of complete knowledge in a constant, dynamic “approximation” of the infinite: “it [sc. eternal truth] can only be sensed, guessed, and suggested; we can only approach (*annähern*) it ... in a restless progressive striving (*fortschreitendes Streben*) ...” (KFSA 13, 205).¹⁸

In this way, according to Schlegel, Socrates’ skepticism is governed by the interplay of negation and affirmation, which makes it “thoroughly dialectical in form and method” and thus the “most satisfying and productive” (KFSA 12, 202). Negation comes in the form of Socrates’ irony, which we examine in detail below (§2). Here it is sufficient to keep in mind that from Schlegel’s perspective one of Socrates’ primary philosophical achievements was, in fact, destructive. The word Schlegel uses is *vernichten*: to abolish or annihilate (e.g., KFSA 12, 202 and KFSA 13, 207). Because Socrates asserted no doctrine or truth, but rather helped to identify those apparent truths and certainties that had no right to be so considered—by, for instance, exposing the “meaninglessness and invalidity (*Leerheit und Nichtigkeit*)” of the sophists’ “deceptive artifices” (KFSA 12, 198)—his skepticism is on one level essentially “negative.” This negation is related to the conviction that the infinite is unreachable, his skepticism being an expression of human limitations, a demonstration of finitude. The flipside of this destructive endeavor—and the affirmative aspect of Socrates’ skepticism—is that, in the absence of those putative truths, the individual is compelled to think for himself, to pursue knowledge in a mode

18 The verbs in this quotation are in the subjunctive case that indicates indirect quotation, the ideas being attributed to “Socrates and Plato,” who are named at the start of the paragraph. See also Schlegel’s description of Plato’s philosophy as “more the seeking for a science than the complete science itself; it is always caught up in the process of becoming” (KFSA 11, 124). Earlier in the same text, Schlegel writes, “philosophy as such is only a striving (*Streben*) for scientific knowledge as a science itself—this is especially the case with the philosophy of Plato. He was never finished with his thinking, this movement of his mind (*Gang seines Geistes*), ever further striving for completed knowledge and perception (*Wissen und Erkenntnis*) of the highest” (KFSA 11, 120). In the lectures on transcendental philosophy, Schlegel writes, “the most complete system can only be an *approximation* (*Approximazion*)” (KFSA 12, 10). See Krämer (1988, 602–3) on the idea of “*approximative progression and perfection*” in Schlegel’s reading of Plato; he believes that this idea comes directly from Fichte.

of “serious seeking” (KFSA 12, 202) that is potentially endless: a “constantly progressive philosophizing” (KFSA 13, 205). While Schlegel concedes that such seeking appears to assume that there is “something certain, a fixed point ... from which one sets out to arrive at the highest knowledge,” which indicates a foundational “principle” that might be “developed into a system,” he bypasses such an assumption—fully unacceptable to his own philosophical position—by claiming that in the place of any such system Socrates placed “a progressive development and perfection of the spirit” (*eine fortschreitende Ausbildung und Vervollkommnung des Geistes*) (FA 12, 202). This “development” or “instruction” (*Ausbildung*) is perpetual and potentially infinite because it strives for that which transcends finite experience in an activity (seeking) that is both determined and constricted by that very same finite experience. In Schlegel’s view, Socrates’ key insight is that such seeking is nonetheless absolutely essential, in part because the alternatives lead to stasis and intellectual as well as spiritual ossification: either one gives up the pursuit of the infinite in “the brash claim already to have found it” (KFSA 12, 202) or one dismisses the pursuit entirely in the belief that it is impossible. It is ultimately and paradoxically through earnest, “progressive” seeking alone, a seeking aware of its limitations but as such primed for the endlessness of its task, that the infinite can be at all approached or approximated (KFSA 13, 207). Object of knowledge and method of knowing are reciprocally bound up in this dialectical interplay of finitude and the infinite.¹⁹

2 From Classical Irony to Romantic Buffoonery

It is telling that Schlegel’s exposition of Socrates’ position in the history of philosophy should culminate in such a description of infinite perfectibility that must begin with and be kept in motion by negation (finitude), since this is a close approximation of his conception of Romantic irony from just a few years earlier. Before we arrive at that development in Schlegel’s thought (§3), we must lay out the notion of irony current in the late eighteenth century in order to illustrate how Schlegel’s turn to Socrates signals an important shift from that rhetorical understanding to a more complex model of communication based in dialogue, and to explain how Schlegel then translates this model into the realm of literature. For when Schlegel trades irony as a figure of speech for irony as a highly skeptical attitude embodied in the figure of Socrates, he on the one hand borrows from an old tradition about the philosopher as dissimulating seeker of truth while on the other hand transforming this image of Socrates

¹⁹ See Nassar 2014, 122.

into an abstract figure of paradox, a model for an unresolved movement of oppositions with direct applicability to problems of knowledge and our desire for the absolute, the unique solution for which Schlegel locates in literature.

In the eighteenth century, irony had little to do with Socrates specifically or philosophy generally, but rather retained a usage inherited from classical rhetoric, where it was primarily understood as a trope and a figure of speech. The lineage of this conception of irony can be traced back to Cicero and, in particular, to Quintilian.²⁰ Ernst Behler quotes the rather simple and straightforward definition from the 1765 French *Encyclopedie* to illustrate how “the word irony had kept its strict and consistent connotation of an established form of speech or communication” up until Schlegel’s time: it is “a figure of speech by which one wants to convey the opposite of what one says.”²¹ It follows that irony was considered an effective means of communication with multiple possible variants (e.g., apophasis, paralipsis, etc.) that allow a speaker or writer to convey something that is undermined, passed over, or negated by the actual discourse employed. Importantly, these instances of rhetorical irony are not a means of deception, nor are they in any way meant to put into question the truthfulness or reliability of what is communicated. On the contrary, the context in which irony is used should always make the intended meaning clear, even though this meaning is not directly stated. In the classical rhetorical tradition, therefore, irony “followed established rules” whose “firm strictures of truth-oriented relations” guaranteed that the intended meaning was understood. As Behler stresses, rhetorical irony “is based on complete agreement, perfect understanding between speaker and listener, and an absolute notion of truth.”²²

Schlegel himself acknowledges the potential usefulness of this “rhetorical species of irony,” though it serves for him primarily as a means of contrast with a different mode of discourse he explicitly associates with Socrates:

Of course, there is a rhetorical species of irony which, sparingly used, has an excellent effect, especially in polemics; but compared to the sublime urbanity of the Socratic muse, it is like the pomp of the most splendid oration set over against the noble style of an ancient tragedy.²³

LF, 148; KFSa 2, 152

20 For an overview, see Behler 1972, 15–27; 1990, 75–8. See Quint. *Inst.* 9.

21 Behler 1990, 75–6; quotation found at 76.

22 Behler 1990, 81.

23 See also KFSa 18, 219, on “rhetorical irony.” On these passages, see Behler 1972, 80.

With this distinction Schlegel decisively turns away from the classical notion of irony as a rhetorical device.²⁴ Instead of identifying irony with a mode of discourse that conveys a clear intention, such as oration, Schlegel compares it to a poetic mode, tragedy, whose task lies beyond the sphere of mere communication and in the realm of creativity. Socrates appears here as irony's paradigmatic figure, elevated to the position of its "muse." His mode of irony differs entirely from that of the orators and their "pomp" (*Pracht*), since it is more than just a subtle means of sophisticated expression, but rather a deft and self-aware "urbanity" in manner and style. This urbanity Schlegel aligns with the non-systematic proliferation of "oral and written dialogues" (LF, 148; KFSA 2, 152) characteristic of city life: the bustling discourse of the marketplace. We will examine the dialogue form as critical to Schlegel's conception of irony below; here it is important to understand that Socrates' irony represents for Schlegel less a method for conveying ideas than a poetic or creative attitude toward life, a mode of living in a world of multiplying ideas and conflicting discourses in which there is no "complete agreement, perfect understanding between speaker and listener," to cite Behler's definition of the aims of rhetorical irony again.

This mode of living is moreover characterized by a particular self-reflexive attitude, an awareness of itself as an art, as Schlegel announces in the fragments on philology: "Socratic irony = sense for the art of living" (*Sokratische Ironie = Lebenskunstsin*n) (KFSA, 16, 80). As Schlegel emphasizes in his lectures on logic from 1805–6, such a self-aware "art of living" involves the art of dissimulation, the ironist's propensity for assuming different roles, borrowing from the discussions proliferating around him. When in these same lectures Schlegel distinguishes between irony as "figure of speech ... from rhetoric" and irony as Socrates employed it, which has "a highly idiosyncratic meaning" (KFSA 13, 207), he means specifically this kind of strategic dissimulation. Intending to expose the emptiness of the sophists' claims to knowledge, Socrates "pretended that he did not at all doubt their omniscience and was himself far too limited and ignorant to understand and grasp the truth of their superior teachings"

24 The shift from the rhetorical definition of irony to a Socratic one also marks a turn away from Roman and classical sources and a return to Greek sources. As Behler writes, "Schlegel attempted to terminate" the form of neoclassicism inherited through the Romans and from France "by establishing a close connection with the aesthetics of the Greeks and by referring directly to Plato and the Platonic tradition ... Schlegel scrupulously avoided presenting the tenets of his doctrine as original ideas in that he painstakingly tried to derive all of it from classical Greek sources" (1988, 49). For detailed accounts of Schlegel's reception of the rhetorical tradition, see Schnyder 1999; Krause 2001.

(KFSA 13, 208).²⁵ Socratic irony thus turns the communicative model of rhetorical irony, in which some idea or truth is conveyed in an understanding between speaker and listener, on its head. Instead of the speaker who has some knowledge imparting it (even if indirectly or by way of its opposite) to listeners who lack it, as in rhetorical irony, Socratic irony begins with a speaker who claims to lack knowledge confronting listeners who believe they are in possession of it. As Schlegel explains, Socrates used the “weapons of rigorous scrutiny and irony” (KFSA 12, 198) to unmask his interlocutors, to show that their supposed wisdom “was founded on illusion and deception” (KFSA 13, 208). While this irony involved the dissimulation of ignorance, Socrates also admitted that he in fact “*knew nothing*.” Through this admission he managed “to force the all-knowing sophists to teach him about the oracles, and thus to find the opportunity to entangle them in their own fallacies, to dispute their own claims, and thus to expose their weaknesses and lack of defenses” (KFSA 12, 201). In each case, Socrates importantly does not communicate or maintain truth, but rather demonstrates the “meaninglessness and invalidity” (KFSA 12, 198) of established truths.²⁶

This image of Socrates as ironist is not entirely new. Schlegel is drawing here on a long tradition of representations, most of them detailed in the earlier chapters of this volume. In seizing on aspects of this tradition, however, Schlegel not only upturns the rhetorical conception of irony but also draws attention to the formal features of Socratic discourse that play a crucial role in his expansion of the concept of irony.

Schlegel describes these features in his 1828–9 Dresden lectures, on the *Philosophy of Language and the Word*:

The dialogue form (*Gesprächsform*) dominates so much in the thoroughly dramatic development and representation of thinking that we find in the works of Plato that even if we eliminated the titles and names of persons, all addresses and responses, the entire dialogue format as well, and stressed only the inner thread of thoughts in their cohesion and progression—the whole would still remain a dialogue (*Gespräch*),

25 See Lane 2006 and Wolfsdorf 2007 and 2008 for the reasons that *eirōneia* in Plato, a term used by others to describe Socrates’ words and actions, denotes not dissembling or disingenuousness but rather a specific form of deception, one that should not be translated “irony.”

26 See also KFSA 13, 207. In more modern terms, since Socratic irony “functions as a kind of provocation rather than a transmission of a message,” as Richard Eldridge puts it, it assumes the role of “a mode of resistance to doctrine, dogmatism, and cold rationalism” (1997, 83).

in which each answer calls forth a new question and which in the alternating flow of speech and counter-speech, or rather of thought and counter-thought, moves forth in a lively fashion.²⁷

KFSA 10, 353

Here Schlegel dismisses the outer, generic trappings of Plato's dialogues as superficial. The true dialogic form of his works, he claims, lies in the interplay of conflicting discourses. These discourses, however, make up a single, cohesive "progression" that reflects the manifold and self-contradictory activity of thinking itself—the "*inner* thread of thoughts." Ernst Behler argues that this movement of thought should not be construed as dialectical, in that it is not oriented toward a goal.²⁸ Schlegel is ambiguous on this account, claiming that he has set "the highest clarity of the living development of thought" as his "goal" (*Zweck* and *Ziel*) in these very lectures, which, while necessarily monologic, he insists unfold in a manner similar to the dialogic form of Plato's works (KFSA 10, 353). In his lectures on the history of philosophy, Schlegel had also characterized Socrates' skeptical, ironic method as "thoroughly dialectical" (KFSA 12, 202).²⁹ Most helpful in this context is to understand that the "motion of thought in Schlegel ultimately has nothing to do with overcoming contradiction," as Fred Rush shows, distinguishing Schlegel's dialectic from Hegel's.³⁰ Schlegel's conception of the dialogue form, rather, amounts to a perpetual fluctuation of conflicting voices that suggests truth is not fixed and determinate but always in the process of becoming.³¹ Dialogue is thus a medium for understanding that generates knowledge as a process of multiplying levels of reflection that are without end, thereby mimicking the procedures of self-consciousness.³²

²⁷ Translation taken in part from Behler 1990, 82–3.

²⁸ Behler 1990, 83.

²⁹ Cf. Schlegel's exposition of Socratic/Platonic dialectic in his lectures on logic as "the art of independent thinking and reflection" (KFSA 13, 204).

³⁰ Rush 2016, 164.

³¹ Bakhtin would later characterize the Socratic dialogues in similar terms. His description of dialogic truth (Bakhtin 1986, 110) is especially relevant, since he views the Socratic dialogue as an important precursor to the modern novel. Indeed, he references Schlegel on the Socratic dialogues (specifically, "Novels are the Socratic dialogues of our time" [LF, 145; KFSA 2, 149]) in situating these works (along with Menippean satire) at the origin of "the development of the novel in modern times" (Bakhtin 1981, 22).

³² See Frischmann 2001, 78, for dialogue as medium of understanding. This conception of the multiplying levels of knowledge reflects Schlegel's re-working of Fichte's epistemology. On Fichte as critical precursor to Schlegel's theories, see Benjamin 2006; Strohschneider-Kohrs 1960, 23–30, 46–7; Krämer 1988, 585–600.

Although these dialogic features are found in Plato's writings in particular, Schlegel stresses that in their "inner structure" they represent the "original Socratic sense" of irony (KFSA 10, 353). Here we see how his conception of irony melds the embodied figure of the historical Socrates in his "sublime urbanity," who engaged in various forms of ironic dissimulation in navigating the conflicting truth-claims espoused from all directions in the city, with an idiosyncratic reading of the Platonic dialogues as the formal model for these proliferating discourses to arrive at a complex notion of the ironic as both a kind of knowledge³³ and a form of expression. Irony for Schlegel is, first of all, knowledge in the form of heightened self-reflexivity, a continually expanding series of second-order observations of the *operation of knowledge* as such that never actually reaches the object of knowledge. It is as such related to the infinite striving for the absolute. We will return to this notion in §3 below. Moreover, irony also describes a mode of expression that serves as a method for coming to terms with the experience of this knowledge, which—as we will see—might involve attempting to represent it or evoking its disorienting effects. As such, irony is characterized by the unresolvable, essentially unstable, but as such productive interplay of irreconcilables. Schlegel allows for this latter kind of irony to flourish above all in the fragments, those non-systematic collections of apparently incomplete thoughts and observations that showcase conflicting styles, themes, subjectivities, and truth claims in the absence of any organizing principle or authoritative voice. As Michel Chaouli writes, "the fragments do more than permit one or more voices to collide: they dissolve the coherence of the authorial voice as such." Chaouli goes on: "For layered over the authorial voices and at times drowning them out, a polyphony of a much stronger—and much stranger—kind pervades the fragments."³⁴

This peculiar polyphony can also be found at work within the single fragment, especially the longer ones.³⁵ Consider the following *Lyceum* fragment, quoted here in full, in which we also find one of Schlegel's fullest expressions of his new conception of irony, again closely linked to the figure of Socrates:

Socratic irony is the only involuntary and yet completely deliberate dissimulation. It is equally impossible to feign it or divulge it. To a person who hasn't got it, it will remain a riddle even after it is openly confessed.

33 See Krämer 1988, 596, on irony as "a constitutive category of knowledge that possesses transcendental necessity and, what is more, anthropological and metaphysical consequences."

34 Chaouli 2002, 64.

35 Chaouli 2002, 62.

It is meant to deceive no one except those who consider it a deception and who either take pleasure in the delightful roguery of making fools of the whole world or else become angry when they get an inkling they themselves might be included. In this sort of irony, everything should be playful and serious, guilelessly open and deeply hidden. It originates in the union of *savoir vivre* and scientific spirit, in the conjunction of a perfectly instinctive and perfectly conscious philosophy. It contains and arouses a feeling of indissoluble antagonism between the absolute and the relative, between impossibility and the necessity of complete communication. It is the freest of all licenses, for by its means one transcends oneself; and yet it is also the most lawful, for it is absolutely necessary. It is a very good sign when the harmonious bores are at a loss about how they should react to this continuous self-parody, when they fluctuate endlessly between belief and disbelief until they get dizzy and take what is meant as a joke seriously and what is meant seriously as a joke. For Lessing irony is instinct; for Hemsternhuis it is classical study; for Hülsen it arises out of the philosophy of philosophy and surpasses these others by far.

LF, 155–6; KFSA 2, 160

The fragment itself performs what it describes, “contain[ing] and arou[sing] a feeling of indissoluble antagonism” by positing and then negating almost every claim. Its juxtaposition of antonyms is dizzying: free and lawful, necessary and impossible, absolute and relative, belief and disbelief, joke and seriousness. Schlegel seems here not just to be writing about the “impossibility and the necessity of complete communication,” but to be instantiating it in the “endless fluctuations” of irreconcilable opposites.³⁶ This polyphonic performance importantly unfolds under the aegis of Socrates. And yet this Socrates assumes a new role. He appears here not just as the philosopher whose ignorance masks wisdom (even if this is the wisdom that he truly knows nothing) and whose dissimulations and mocking questions are strategies meant to provoke his interlocutors into serious thought. Schlegel presents Socrates’ dissimulations,

36 Chaoui 2002, 62, provides a succinct example in the following *Athenäum* fragment (quoted here in full): “It is equally fatal for the mind to have a system and to have none. It will simply have to decide to combine the two” (LF, 167; KFSA 2, 173). Chaoui follows the quotation with a parenthetical set of questions that highlight the strangeness of this paradoxical fragment: “(How can two mutually exclusive properties be combined? Does the mind, while combining the two alternatives, reside with the system or with its opposite? The same question also goes for the voice of the fragment itself: is it, while enjoining us to join the fatal options, systematic or unsystematic?)”.

rather, as impossible to pin down, as also participating in the “indissoluble antagonism” of opposites, at once intentional but somehow also “involuntary,” simultaneously “feigned” while also serious.³⁷ Furthermore, the grammatical subject of the first sentence is not the person of Socrates but his ironic mode, so that irony as such emerges as the role of active agent, breaking free of the individual philosopher to become an unruly, disruptive force that leads, ultimately, to indeterminacy.³⁸ Both “free” and “lawful,” irony thus “transcends” the person who employs it. As Richard Eldridge writes of this passage, irony becomes “an instrument of eternal self-transcendence rooted in wayward spontaneity.”³⁹ The result is that truth cannot be determined, and that in its place irony confronts us, as Eldridge points out in reference to Socrates, with the productive play of undecidability.⁴⁰

This fragment sets us up to explore the final stage in Schlegel’s appropriation of Socratic irony, which falls in the realm of transcendental philosophy, where Schlegel is primarily concerned with the operations of knowledge and the desire for the absolute. Before we follow him in this undertaking, which is the culmination of his theory of irony and thus the endpoint of his engagement with Socrates, I would like to consider another, related move in Schlegel’s reception of Socrates, namely his application of the model of Socratic irony and dialogue to the realm of literature. As Ernst Behler puts it, Schlegel’s “revolution in the history of the notion of irony” comes first and foremost in the way he compares the “modern author’s attempt to communicate with his reader” with “Socrates’ situation as philosopher vis à vis his disciples.”⁴¹ In this way Schlegel can claim that “Novels are the Socratic dialogues of our time” (LF, 145; KFSa 2, 149). With the author (read: narrator) in the position of Socrates, readers are guided through the literary work by a voice whom they can neither entirely trust nor entirely do without. The ostensible guarantor of authority in the text, the narrator (in Schlegel’s time almost always identified with the author), comes to be seen—through the lens of Schlegelian irony—as a

37 See KFSa 16, 144: “Completed, absolute irony ceases to be irony and becomes serious.”

38 Schlegel elsewhere accords language a power independent of its users: “words often understand themselves better than do those who use them” (LF, 260; KFSa 2, 364). See Rasch 1992, 74, on Schlegelian irony as “resid[ing] in language like a virus, a parasite, uncontrolled by external manipulation and proliferating against the grain of intention.” See also Chaouli 2002, 35.

39 Eldridge 1997, 84.

40 “Does Socrates know (that he knows nothing), or does he know nothing? Socratic irony ... is an act of *poesis* that stimulates new acts of *poesis* in its readers through its very undecidability” (Eldridge 1997, 83–4).

41 Behler 1988, 51.

slippery figure whose attitude toward his story and characters frequently shifts and who often appeals to the reader directly, if slyly.

This manifestation of irony in literature Schlegel aligns with parabasis, a feature of classical Greek comedy in which the chorus steps away from the action and directly addresses the audience. Using the rhetorical variant *parecbasis*, Schlegel describes it thus:

Parecbasis, a speech held in the name of the poet and directed at the people in the middle of the piece by the chorus. Indeed, it was a complete interruption and suspension (*Unterbrechung und Aufhebung*) of the piece in which ... the greatest disorderliness (*Zügellosigkeit*) reigned, with the chorus stepping out all the way to the outer edge of the proscenium saying the most crude things to the audience. The name also comes from this stepping out (*ἐκβασις*).

KFSA 11, 88

Translated into the realm of the text, parabasis describes the self-reflexive narrator who draws attention to the artifice of his or her story and makes gestures to the reader, wrapping him or her up in the events as they unfold. In classical rhetoric, parabasis is synonymous with digression, the willful disruption of one discourse by an apparently unrelated one. Schlegel seizes on both senses to characterize the ironic mode of the novel as an instantiation of the chaotic and the arabesque (KFSA 16, 276). "Irony is a permanent parecbasis," he writes in the philosophical fragments (KFSA 18, 85). What Schlegel hereby values in the literary work is its self-awareness *as* construct, as well as the playful ways in which it flaunts this self-awareness. The author (as narrator) assumes a new guise in the ironic work, both conveying action and commenting on it, while at the same time stepping away to reflect on these modes. It is this capricious and mercurial self-reflexivity of the literary—a translation of the self-contradictory but also self-transcending Socratic dialogue into fictional narrative—which Schlegel identifies with irony in a way that remains with us today, whether we are speaking of the subtle ironic mode of a Thomas Mann or that of a postmodern rogue such as Flann O'Brien.⁴²

42 On the political ramifications of Schlegel's notion of parabasis, see Chaouli 2002, 198–207. See also Schumacher 2000, 237–9, on parabasis as a surprising or even chaotic interruption. Schumacher cites a poem by Goethe entitled "Parabasis," which ends with the line "With astonishment I arrive!" (*Zum Erstaunen bin ich da*).

Schlegel does not limit these features to modern literature alone; while not in every work of literature, he finds them in texts by authors such as Shakespeare, Cervantes, Boccaccio, Sterne, and many of the ancient writers:

There are ancient and modern poems that are pervaded by the divine breath of irony throughout and informed by a truly transcendental buffoonery. Internally: the mood that surveys everything and rises infinitely above all limitations (*alles Begingte*), even above its own art, virtue, or genius; externally, in its execution: the mimic style of an averagely gifted Italian *buffo*.

LF, 148; KFSa 2, 152

Schlegel's distinction between the internal and external in this fragment corresponds to his later description of Socrates, behind whose "gentle smile" and "cheerful surface" we find hidden "a higher meaning" and not infrequently "the most sublime seriousness" (KFSa 10, 353). This surface/depth division, however, is highly unstable. As in the fragment quoted above, in which Schlegel describes Socratic irony as both "involuntary and yet completely deliberate" (LF, 155; KFSa 2, 160), irony as a fundamental principle of the literary arts does not boil down to simple dissimulation or authorial playfulness. Schlegel's assessment of Goethe's seminal bildungsroman *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* is a case in point. This is a work that in his later notes Schlegel directly aligns with Socratic irony: "Meister = εἰρ [ironic] π [poetry] (like Socrat[es'] ironic φ [philosophy]), because it is π π [poetry of poetry]" (KFSa 18, 24). In his famous 1798 review of the novel Schlegel writes that "irony hovers over the entire work" in such a way that it becomes increasingly difficult to say when the author is serious or mocking: "One should not let oneself be fooled when the poet treats persons and events in an easy and lofty mood, when he mentions his hero almost never without irony, and when he seems to smile down from the heights of his spirit upon his master work, as if this were not for him the most solemn seriousness" (KFSa 2, 133).⁴³

This undecidability of narratorial attitude and seriousness plays itself out with respect to the ironic stance of the author in terms of intention versus instinct or affectation versus naïveté. Irony, Schlegel claims, cannot be entirely intentional, otherwise it becomes affectation; neither can it be fully instinctual, in which case it would be merely naïve (LF, 167; KFSa 2, 172–3).⁴⁴ Schlegel here takes Friedrich Schiller's distinction between naïve and sentimental

43 Translation from Behler 1990, 85.

44 See also KFSa 16, 120.

poetry to its Romantic endpoint, dismissing willful irony or involuntary irony, on their own, as equally unsatisfactory: "Intention taken to the point of irony and accompanied by the arbitrary illusion of its self-destruction is quite as naïve as instinct taken to the point of irony" (LF, 205; KFSA 2, 217). Ideally, the two come together as one: "The beautiful, poetical, ideal naïve must combine intention and instinct" (LF, 167; KFSA 2, 173).

In this way irony emerges as "the form of paradox" itself (LF, 149; KFSA 2, 153), at once aware and unaware—or rather "hovering" (LF, 175; KFSA 2, 182) or "fluctuating" between the two in a continuous process of "self-creation and self-destruction" (LF, 167; KFSA 2, 172). These are constitutive of works of literature and can be located in the authorial vacillations that at once generate the literary world in enthusiastic zeal while also calling this world into question with skepticism, thereby breaking the illusion of the poetic construct.⁴⁵ Examples are numerous in novels by Schlegel's favorite authors, from Cervantes to Sterne, and they would become the defining features of self-consciously Romantic works by contemporaries of Schlegel's such as Ludwig Tieck, Clemens Brentano, and E.T.A. Hoffmann.⁴⁶ The "transcendental buffoonery" of these works succeeds in "rising infinitely above all limitations" by virtue of the combination of enthusiasm and skepticism, of affectation and naïveté, of self-creation and self-destruction. The knowing smile of the author, who like Goethe "seems to smile down from the heights" (KFSA 2, 133),⁴⁷ is here related to Socrates' "gentle smile" (KFSA 10, 353), betraying an awareness that the infinite as such is necessarily unreachable, and that the closest serious and intentional attempt to rise up to it lies in the perpetual self-mocking playfulness of the clown. Because, as Schlegel furthermore writes in the fragments, "Whoever desires the infinite doesn't know what he desires" (LF, 149; KFSA 2, 153), the fully serious individual who strives for that absolute, because he believes he knows what it is for which he strives, will necessarily fail. Only he who assumes the role of the buffoon, not knowing what he strives for, can—by virtue of not knowing—participate in the absolute, thereby becoming sublimely serious despite himself.

45 See Benjamin 1996, 163; Behler 1972, 67–8.

46 Strohschneider-Kohrs 1960 emphasizes the artist-creative and aesthetic ramifications of Schlegel's concept of irony (e.g., 31–7), and in the second half of her book (283–435) elaborates them using German Romantic literary texts.

47 Translation from Behler 1990, 85.

3 Romantic Irony as Radical Recuperation of Socratic Irony

We have now arrived at that hazy border between literature and metaphysics where irony holds sway. On the one hand, of course, it is philosophy, not literature, that is “the real homeland of irony,” as Schlegel insists (LF, 148; KFSA 12, 152). And yet part of early Romanticism’s innovation lies in blurring the boundary between these two realms. Schlegel essentially claimed that poetry—which, in his usage, is not limited to the lyric, but designates literature as such—should pick up where philosophy falls short: “It should be brought to mind that the necessity of poetry is based on the requirement to represent the infinite, which emerges from the imperfection of philosophy. This is the philosophical justification for poetry.”⁴⁸ The imperative, then, is for poetry and philosophy to be brought together: “poetry and philosophy should be made one” (LF, 157; KFSA 2, 161). Poetry as philosophy is the privileged place where irony flourishes (paradigmatically in the Platonic dialogues⁴⁹) and which ultimately also makes possible a unique relationship between the individual and his fundamental striving. By virtue of being infused with irony; by virtue of its intrinsic affinity for the irreconcilable and (as we will see) the incomprehensible; furthermore, by virtue of emerging from both instinct and intention, poetry succeeds in approximating the infinite in a way that the sciences (including philosophy) cannot. Let us now look more closely at the problem posed by the infinite to which literature and irony serve as solutions.

Schlegel begins his lectures on transcendental philosophy with two complementary axiomatic claims: 1) the “*tendency of philosophy is toward the absolute*” (and not just to “a relative absolute, but towards an *absolute absolute*”) (KFSA 12, 4),⁵⁰ and 2) philosophy arises from consciousness of the infinite (KFSA 12, 7).⁵¹ Schlegel arrives at the second claim by abstracting from the first. If philosophy strives to know the absolute, then it must confront the fact that this striving will necessarily be infinite. It follows not only that philosophy is, in this way, infinite (a process that never reaches its goal), but that knowledge,

48 Schlegel 1999, 201 (from unpublished lectures on language and literature). Translation in part taken from Millán-Zaibert 2007, 170.

49 Krause 2002, 352, notes that Schlegel viewed Plato primarily as a poet. In Schlegel’s own *Dialogue on Poetry* (1799–1800), he writes: “While talking about the transition from poetry to philosophy and from philosophy to poetry, you mentioned Plato as poet (*Dichter*) (may the Muse reward you for it) ...” (Schlegel 1968, 75; KFSA 2, 304). Elsewhere he writes that “Plato was the greatest philosophical artist (*Künstler und Darsteller*)” (KFSA 11, 109) who “sought to represent the [notion of] eternal becoming, formation, and development [central to] his ideas artistically (*künstlich*) in dialogues” (KFSA 11, 120).

50 Schlegel 1997, 242. See also KFSA 12, 11.

51 Schlegel 1997, 243.

too, must be infinite—and thus, for us finite beings, necessarily fragmentary, incomplete:

If knowledge of the infinite is itself infinite, therefore always only incomplete, imperfect, then philosophy as a science can never be completed, closed and perfect, it can always only strive for these high goals, and try all possible ways to come closer and closer to them. Philosophy is in general more of a quest or a striving for a science than itself a science.⁵²

KFSA 12, 166

And yet “there is nothing higher in man” than this striving, which is “a *yearning* (Sehnen), a *longing* (Sehnsucht) *for the infinite*.” Indeed, the feeling of the sublime that this consciousness of the infinite awakens in mankind is what distinguishes him from the animals. It is, Schlegel stresses, fundamentally human (KFSA 12, 7).⁵³

While it is clear that in developing this notion of an infinite philosophy as a fundamental condition of the unknowability of the absolute Schlegel is responding to contemporary debates of post-Fichtean idealism,⁵⁴ his description of Socrates in the Cologne lectures on logic comes very close to expressing a similar impasse. Explaining why “Platonic philosophy” could not be systematic, for instance, Schlegel writes:

In fact, it appears that the object of philosophy for Socrates and Plato so exceeded the narrow limits of human understanding that they maintained that even with the greatest efforts one could never manage to raise oneself up to knowledge of eternal truth (*zur Erkenntnis der unendlichen Wahrheit*) and fully exhaust it. It can only be sensed (*ahnen*), guessed, and suggested; we can only ever approach (*annähern*) it in a restless, progressive striving (*ein rastlos fortschreitendes Streben*) and in an escalating, self-perfecting development (*Bildung*) and refinement of

52 Translation from Frank 2004, 185. See Millán-Zaibert 2007, 139. Cf. Schlegel's pronouncement on idealism: “The essence and actual goal of idealism is *the positive knowledge of infinite reality*. Since, however, this knowledge would have to contain an infinite fullness, it can only ever be incomplete” (KFSA 12, 126). See also Nassar 2014, 84–5, on understanding Schlegel's notion of the “infinite” as both epistemological and ontological.

53 Schlegel 1997, 245.

54 See Frank 2004, 55–76 (“On the Unknowability of the Absolute”), for the background on these.

all intellectual abilities and activities (*aller Geisteskräfte und Tätigkeiten*). But to attain it fully remains for mankind an unsolvable problem.

KFSA 13, 205–6

Socrates' "problem" was not just unsolved, but "unsolvable," because the truth for which he strived was not just "eternal," but—as the German indicates—"infinite." That this leads to a "restless, progressive" movement is not reason for despair;⁵⁵ it is the condition of finite existence. In fact, both of these negative models—ancient and modern—set the stage for Schlegel to radically reconceptualize Socratic irony as the only adequate response to this condition. For irony "in the Socratic school," as Schlegel writes in his lectures on language, "emerges from the feeling of one's own inability ever to be able to grasp in words and completely reach with language the fullness of the divine" (KFSA 10, 460). And yet the "feeling of deficit" and "incompleteness," as Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert puts it, that results from "the realization of the inherent incompleteness of knowledge," from an acknowledgment that "we are finite knowers with a longing to know ... what is without limits, the Absolute," is actually "what fuels our desire to know and to investigate."⁵⁶ Our lack of knowledge—the incommensurability between our finite selves and the infinite universe—is not lamentable, but rather constitutive of who we are (as finite beings), and therefore highly valuable.⁵⁷

Irony—as response to this situation—is thus importantly neither melancholic nor tragic.⁵⁸ Ernst Behler notes that the "considerable pessimism in the understanding of the concept of irony," especially as it comes to dominate in the nineteenth century, does not apply to Schlegel, who does not believe that because "the absolute can only appear in limited, finite, and transitory form" it follows that "immeasurable sadness permeates every form of life."⁵⁹ Schlegel even distinguishes his resuscitation of the Socratic model of irony from the "harsh, bitter irony" that is based on "general negation," and whose

55 Beiser 2003, 129.

56 Millán-Zaibert 2007, 139. Frank 2004, 189: "The beginning of philosophy is therefore not a positive principle grasped by knowledge, but rather the feeling of a lack of knowledge ... Knowledge is not given, but rather the feeling of an emptiness. This appears to reflection as an aspiration toward fulfillment, as a striving for what is lacking."

57 Cf. Comstock 1987, 446, who expresses this incommensurability as a "split between form and essence inherent to our temporal existence."

58 Behler 1988, 45–6. See Szondi 1986, 68, for one particularly striking reading of Romantic irony as a failure to reach perfection that is "unbearable" and ultimately a "tragedy."

59 Behler 1988, 46.

goal is “eternal doubt.”⁶⁰ His Socratic notion of irony is creative, productive, and affirmative. By setting in motion a perpetual, unresolved alternation of irreconcilables, “the continual self-creating interchange of two conflicting thoughts” (LF, 176; KFSA 2, 184), irony enables the individual to rise above his limitations and “sense” or intimate (*ahnen*) the infinite,⁶¹ not as reachable, but as the indicator of the contingency of existence, of the unknowability of the absolute. The moment of “sensing” the infinite coincides with the moment of its dissolution—of the realization that it is an illusion that we might achieve it.⁶² This experience of negativity (finitude) as it confronts the infinite—that “feeling of indissoluble antagonism between the absolute and the relative, between the impossibility and necessity of complete communication” (LF, 156; KFSA 2, 160)—nonetheless compels us to continue striving in the form of creative participation, constantly “fluctuating between self-creation and self-destruction” (LF, 167; KFSA 2, 172),⁶³ which, as Ernst Behler writes, “is the point of the highest perfection for Schlegel, that is, of a perfection which is conscious of its own imperfection by inscribing this feature into its own text.”⁶⁴

In this way, ultimately, irony is a “tool used to make the inherent incompleteness of human experience apparent.”⁶⁵ Schlegel finds this tool most prevalent as an essential feature of literature itself.⁶⁶ In what is probably his most-cited fragment from the *Athenäum*, Schlegel describes Romantic literature in terms that closely approximate his reflections on irony. “Romantic poetry is a progressive, universal poetry,” the fragment begins, and after emphasizing its generic capaciousness and promiscuity, Schlegel turns to its highly nuanced capacities for reflection:

60 Behler 1971, 118, sees the references to the “new dialectics” from which this type of irony emerges as a clear indication that Schlegel has Hegel in mind in formulating his critique.

61 KFSA 13, 205, in relation to Socrates (quoted above, p. 738). See Rush 2016, 69.

62 “But, one could easily argue, is, then, the *infinite* itself not a *fiction*? Is it not an *error*, an *illusion*, or a *misunderstanding*? To this we answer as follows: Yes, it is a *fiction*. But an absolutely necessary one” (Schlegel 1997, 247; KFSA 12, 9).

63 Beiser 2002, 129, provides a useful gloss on this notion: “In other words, the ironist creates forever anew because he always puts forward a new perspective, a richer concept, a clearer formulation; but he also destroys himself because he is forever critical of his own efforts. It is only through this interchange between self-creation and self-destruction that he strives forward in the eternal search for the truth.”

64 Behler 1990, 84. On the same page, Behler writes: “it is by no means a deficiency but rather the highest level we can reach.”

65 Millán-Zaibert 2007, 167.

66 For a reading of Schlegelian irony that emphasizes its role in the formation of subjectivity, see Rush 2016, esp. 69–73.

And it can also—more than any other form—hover at the midpoint between the portrayed and the portrayer, free of all real and ideal self-interest, on the wings of poetic reflection, and can raise that reflection again and again to a higher power (*potenzieren*), can multiply it in an endless succession of mirrors ... Other kinds of poetry are finished and are now capable of being fully analyzed. The romantic kind of poetry is still in the state of becoming; that, in fact, is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected ... It alone is infinite, just as it alone is free.

LF, 175; KFSA 2, 182–3

Because of its high degree of reflexivity and indeterminacy—each intimately connected to irony as a literary mode—as well as its fundamental incompleteness, Romantic poetry is commensurate with the experience of a reality rent in two by the apparent irreconcilability of the absolute and our finitude. As Fred Rush writes, poetry for Schlegel “is a form of *communication* that helps one realize the truth about one’s relation to the absolute. The constitutive conceptual indeterminacy of art makes it exemplary of the indeterminacy of one’s own attempts to represent one’s relation to the absolute.”⁶⁷ This relation is, in essence, one of *becoming*. As a figure for the dynamic, constantly unfolding progression of reflective consciousness as it strives for the absolute, irony ultimately emerges as a means of *participation in* this becoming. To approximate the absolute is, in this way, to participate in it—and vice versa. By always falling short of the absolute, never fully reaching it, we in fact instantiate it as what Dalia Nassar calls the “reciprocal mediation” of the finite and the infinite. Since, as Nassar convincingly argues, “there *is* nothing that is not a mediation or presentation of the infinite” for Schlegel, it follows that “there is nothing that is not in a state of eternal becoming.”⁶⁸ If the “absolute *is* the relation between the infinite and finite; it *is* the act in which meaning is realized and thus truth occurs; it *is* the necessity that emerges in reciprocal determination,”⁶⁹ then the “apparent incommensurability of infinite and finite is ... overcome through becoming.”⁷⁰ That becoming is also, as Schlegel declares in this fragment, fundamentally constitutive of the literary as such.

Since Nassar’s more ontological reading of Schlegel shifts us away from the questions of knowledge with which we began, I would like in closing to

67 Rush 2016, 72.

68 Nassar 2014, 122.

69 Nassar 2014, 155.

70 Nassar 2014, Nassar bases her readings here on KFSA 12, 410–11.

return to these questions as a way of bringing Socrates back into the equation. For irony is also, as we have seen, a form of knowledge, however paradoxical. Indeed, it is the paradoxicality of irony—its hovering between opposites, its fundamental indeterminacy—that leads to the question of the *kind* of knowledge we can even say we end up with when we participate in the absolute via the methods or experience of irony.

Schlegel's writings suggest that ironic knowledge (or irony *as* knowledge) is actually closer to a lack of knowledge, that is, closer to ignorance or incomprehension. These apparently negative forms of knowing, however, are positively valued. Irony's task, as the endless fluctuation between "self-creation and self-destruction" (LF, 167; KFSA 2, 172), is both generative and disruptive. Thus, as a proliferating series of second-order observations *on* the act of knowing, irony never stabilizes as knowledge of reality, always ending up falling short of complete comprehension. Ironic knowledge, then, is ultimately not knowledge of some determinate reality, but knowledge of ignorance. This, of course, is still knowledge, as Schlegel explains in his discussion of the central paradox of skepticism, "*How can one know that one cannot know anything?*":

There will always be something left over alongside unknowing (*Nichtwissen*), some knowledge (*Wissen*) that one has such that this question can be sustained (*fortsetzen*) in all its potencies to infinity. One can arrive at no other outcome than that knowledge will always contain in itself unknowing, ignorance (*die Unwissenheit*): that is, knowledge always transcends (*über ... hinausgeht*) ignorance.

KFSA 12, 126

This remainder of knowledge at once "transcends ignorance" while remaining caught up in the ineluctability of "unknowing."⁷¹ Each successive level of reflection appears to reach some positive knowledge, though this knowledge is ultimately only that one cannot fully know. The resulting, multiplying levels of reflection describe the endless oscillations of irony, the perpetual mirroring of consciousness as it reflects on itself without ever fully grasping determinate objects of reflection. As the "highest, most pure skepticism" (KFSA 18, 406), irony is thus a "clear consciousness of eternal agility, of an infinitely teeming chaos" (LF, 247; KFSA 2, 263). But such "clear consciousness" is less knowledge

⁷¹ "One has to have a great deal of understanding in order not to understand some things" (KFSA 18, 114).

of the infinite than it is a kind of astonished incomprehension in the face of this infinite chaos, along with the creative “agility” to withstand it.⁷²

On one level, we can read these and similar statements about irony in Schlegel as “the ultimate show of humility ... used to show how little all humans know.”⁷³ As such, Schlegel’s program closely approximates Socrates’, whose “honest, serious striving for the truth,” as Schlegel writes, manifested itself in the “laudable humility” of “freely and openly admitted ignorance,” through which the Greek philosopher demonstrated “the infinite magnitude and sublimity, the inexhaustible abundance and multiplicity of the highest objects of knowledge” (KFSA 13, 208). This admission of ignorance is the point at which Socratic irony as dissimulation of ignorance stops being ironic and becomes serious—and thus becomes most fully and completely ironic (KFSA 16, 144). Ignorance turns over into the highest wisdom. Schlegel seizes on this paradox in radicalizing the anti-foundationalist, skeptical method of Socrates, in the attempt to become in fact “more Socratic than Socrates was able to be” (KFSA 16, 64). This radicalization involves not just declaring ignorance, but actively cultivating a state of “unknowing” (*Nichtwissen*) by—in a manner similar to a Zen koan—confronting us with incomprehensibility. In his fragments and especially in his 1800 essay, “On Incomprehensibility,” a highly ironic and irreverent response to the critics of the fragments, Schlegel performs an anti-systemic philosophy that refuses to cohere into a whole by disrupting stable reference points for cohesion and comprehension.⁷⁴ In this essay he goes so far as to undermine citational practices, blurring the line between quotation and commentary with the result that any attempt to locate an authorial voice becomes impossible.⁷⁵ Using polyphony, contradiction, and interruption (parabasis), the fragments similarly generate uncertainty and inscrutability, as we saw in our discussion of a *Lyceum* fragment (“Socratic irony ...” LF, 155–6; KFSA 2, 160) in §2 above. Instead of making apodictic claims, Schlegel’s ironic method postpones—sometimes infinitely—the apparently communicable by reflecting on the possibilities of communication itself,⁷⁶ leading to a dizzying

72 The original formulation of the above fragment pushes the claim further: “*Irony* is clear χα [chaos] in agility, intellectual intuition of an eternal χα [chaos] of an infinitely full, brilliantly eternal cyclical” (KFSA 18, 228). No longer is irony “clear consciousness”; here it is “clear chaos” that approximates the collapse of subject and object in an act of intellectual intuition. Cf. Benjamin 1996, 148, and note 78 below.

73 Millán-Zaibert 2007, 168.

74 Chaoui 2002, 36: “the oddity of Schlegel’s work lies in aspiring to an account with claims to totality, while at the same time eschewing notions of coherence and unity.”

75 Schumacher 2000, 182–207.

76 “Of all things that have to do with communicating ideas, what could be more fascinating than the question of whether such communication is actually possible?” (LF, 269; KFSA 2, 363).

array of reflections upon reflections, an “irony of irony” (LF, 267; KFSA 2, 369) that multiplies the levels of self-reflexivity to the point of incomprehension. The resulting cognitive “noise”⁷⁷ induces a state of ignorance—since there is nothing that we end up actually knowing besides the ever-unfolding process of reflection itself—whose flipside is a confrontation with the infinite “chaos of thought” (KFSA 11, 114).⁷⁸

These two states are as inextricably related as the finite is to the infinite or complete unknowing to absolute knowledge. Their perpetual tension comprises the progressive striving that characterizes human existence. Keeping this tension unresolved, forever in motion, is the purview of irony, which compels us to ever-heightened self-reflexivity. And when we “*think* ourselves,” as Schlegel writes we have no choice but to do (since we cannot intuit ourselves), “We then appear to our astonishment (*Erstaunen*) infinite” (KFSA 12, 332). This “astonishment” in the face of the infinite is, yet again, a direct inheritance of Socratic irony, which Schlegel describes late in his career, using similar language, as the “astonishment (*Erstaunen*) of the thinking intellect about itself” (KFSA 10, 353). Astonished thought is a manifestation of that ironic suspension or “hovering” in the face of the infinite that is not—as it might at first suggest—a static moment so much as an essential part of the intensive approximation of and participation in the absolute.⁷⁹ It is the recognition of our limitations—our fundamental ignorance—as not just ineluctable, but also as absolutely necessary.⁸⁰ It is, finally, the acceptance of the insuperable incompleteness of our experience and the unfulfilled nature of our striving as the only thing that makes experience possible—and, paradoxically, fulfilling.

More than simply a philosophical forebear, Socrates ultimately serves for Friedrich Schlegel as the inspiration for a new mode of philosophizing, one that combines creativity and critical thinking in the effort to confront the world with productive skepticism. Throughout Schlegel's writings, from his early fragments to the late lectures, Socrates emerges as a figure of unpredictability, paradox, unruliness, and humility who models an “art of living” (KFSA 16, 80)

77 Rasch 1992, 74.

78 Walter Benjamin (1996, 148) tantalizingly suggests that reflection heightened to infinity can turn back on itself and become a kind of “not knowing” (*im Nicht-Wissen*) in which the subject becomes “identical with the object.” This, it seems to me, would be an endpoint of sorts, a utopian unification of subject and object that would spell the end of striving—and as such of existence—and is therefore incompatible with Schlegel's thought, which insists on the endlessness of our participation in the absolute.

79 Rush 2016, 165–6. See KFSA 13, 205 and 207 for variations on *Annäherung*, approach or approximation.

80 Lear 2011, esp. 3–39, develops a similar view of irony by way of a reading of Kierkegaard.

without which modern, Romantic philosophy would succumb to the dilemma posed by skepticism. Socrates enables Schlegel to conceive of a mode of fundamental human striving for the absolute that remains consistent with his firmly held skeptical conviction that such striving cannot be fulfilled, while not resigning itself to tragic defeat. The ironical life that Socrates models—which for Schlegel involves relinquishing oneself to the uncertainties of life (even of existence) and allowing oneself to be “astonished” by the endless productive capacities of “progressive” human thinking, even to the point of unknowing buffoonery—ends up being paradigmatic for how best to respond to this paradox, for how best to go about being a finite human in the face of an infinite universe. Through the figure of Socrates, who admitted knowing nothing and insisted that this was the highest knowledge, Schlegel finds the perfect expression of our imperfections that at the same time holds the key to overcoming these limitations. Socratic irony “raised to a higher power” (LF, 175; KFSA 2, 182) as Schlegelian irony submits itself to this paradoxical condition as participation in the never-ending flux of infinite existence itself.

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Hegel on Socrates and the Historical Advent of Moral Self-Consciousness

Brady Bowman

1 Background and Context: Hegel's Political Thought and Philosophy of History

1.1 *Graecophilia in German Romanticism and the Task of Modern Culture*

Ambivalence marks Hegel's attitude both toward Socrates himself, the historical person, and toward Socrates' enduring philosophical legacy, to which Hegel (1770–1831) is indebted as a dialectician, as a metaphysician of the true and the good in their constitutive relation to human reason, and also as a theorist of political authority and legitimacy.¹ His ambivalence arises at least in part from his admiration of classical Greek and especially Athenian culture in the age of Pericles—the culture that produced in Socrates the very personification of that principle of critical self-reflection and conscientious individualism that, as Hegel sees it, was to bring about its destruction. Some acquaintance with Hegel's idealizing views of Greek antiquity and their connection to his political thought and philosophy of history is therefore useful in understanding his reception of Socrates and the Socratic legacy.

In celebrating the classical ideal, Hegel exhibits an attitude pervasive among eighteenth-century German intellectuals. Winckelmann had initiated and Lessing further swelled a tide of *graecophilia* that was not to ebb in Hegel's lifetime and whose architectural expression through Schinkel and others shaped the newly ascendant Prussian capital where Hegel lectured at the zenith of his career.² Yet whereas an earlier generation had endeavored to embrace Winckelmann's recommendation directly, seeking to forge a

1 The research that went into writing this article was carried out in part during my stay as a fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation at the Forschungszentrum für Klassische Deutsche Philosophie, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, 2014–16. I would like to thank Christopher Moore, the editor of this volume, for valuable comments on the initial draft of this chapter and suggestions on how to improve it.

2 Cf. Saure 2013; also see Schinkel 1858.

uniquely German cultural identity through imitation of the Greeks,³ Hegel's more astute contemporaries felt themselves separated by an epochal chasm from the ancients' "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur."⁴ Schiller's influential essay *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry* (1795) is a prime example, contrasting the Greeks' reflectively unmediated relation to themselves and nature with the conceptually mediated and self-consciously reflective attitude he views as characteristic of the modern, "sentimental" age.⁵ These contrasting shapes of consciousness underlie the artworks that express them and to which they have given rise. To recognize such a generic difference between ancient and modern cultural production is to transform the question of imitation in its very sense, if not to render it wholly moot.

Hegel certainly did not believe that Greek religion, art, philosophy, or political life could be restored in the modern world. Nor did he believe it desirable that they should be. Despite the blossoming in Athens of a republican form of government alongside scientific and philosophical inquiry, the culture of the classical city-state was ultimately incapable of assimilating either self-conscious critical reflection or the assertion of individual conscience, both of which are essential elements of human freedom. Thus, if we know what it is we truly will, we cannot rationally will that the naïve "beauty" of classical Greece be restored, as is it is incompatible with the very notion and exercise of a self-consciously free and rational will.⁶ The determined task of the modern

3 As Winckelmann puts it in his *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen Werke in der Mahlerey und Bildhauer-Kunst* (Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture) (1755, ²1756), "The one way for us to become great, perhaps inimitable, is by imitating the ancients" (SN 9/1.52).

4 LM 9.6.

5 More accurately, Schiller associates these attitudes with antiquity and modernity, but allows for the possibility of real anachronisms such as Euripides, a sentimental Greek, and Goethe, a naïve modern (cf. NA 20, 1.435–6, 459). Also cf. Schiller's mourning of the "Gods of Greece" in his poem of the same title, whose passing from the stage of history he portrays as the irreversible concomitant of the rise of monotheism and the mechanistic worldview it made possible. Despite modernity's scientific and technological progress, the costs to humanity are deemed ruinous: "When gods were still more human, humans were more divine" (NA 1.195, ll. 191–2).

6 The paradigmatic beauty of Greek ethical life is a recurring theme throughout Hegel's writings. On beauty as the "principle" of classical Greek life, see TWA 12.329, 18.172, 19.488. Hegel discusses the incompatibility of (social-political) beauty and self-consciously rational, individual freedom in PR §185; also cf. PhG 240–1/PS §§441–2, TWA 12.308, 324. Though Hegel does not do so explicitly, one is tempted in his stead to construe Socrates' proverbial ugliness as a physiognomic expression of his self-reflective conscientiousness, both equally inimical to the "beauty" of Greek ethical life.—Hegel's most emphatic expression of commitment to the Hellenic principle of beauty is to be found in a commencement speech he held in his capacity as rector of Nuremberg's *Königliche Gymnasialanstalt* on 29 September 1809: "We

age, and hence too of modern philosophy, is therefore to realize a new kind of cultural unity, including especially political unity, that harmonizes the moral demands of self-conscious individuality with the need for supra-individually binding, rationally legitimated norms and conventions required for political coexistence in the modern state.

1.2 *Sittlichkeit* vs. *Moralität*: Two Basic Concepts in Hegel's Practical Philosophy

Hegel looks to the classical polis as an orienting ideal despite his conviction of its uniqueness and unrepeatability, indeed despite believing it incompatible with modern demands for individual freedom and rational legitimation. It serves as the exemplar of what he calls *Sittlichkeit*, usually translated as “ethical life.” *Sittlichkeit* is an abstract substantive derived from *Sitte* (custom, conventional duty; compare Latin *mos*)⁷ and refers in Hegel's usage to the life of a society as shaped by universally acknowledged, authoritative, and practically efficacious institutions, ranging from familial organization through commercial and professional relations to legislation, government, and the administration of justice. On his view, individual subjects are not sufficient unto themselves to originate, ground, and maintain a structure that is adequately universal and objectively binding to guarantee the existence of a flourishing commonwealth. Ethical life or *Sittlichkeit* must therefore be constituted as an independent sphere that is logically prior to individual subjects' specific normative conception of their social roles and attendant duties.

At the same time, Hegel equally insists that ethical life comes to be realized only insofar as the specific normative conception of roles and duties can and actually does guide the actions of individual social and political agents. Hegel therefore recognizes the indispensability of individual commitment

must begin with what is excellent, and thus the literature of the Greeks in particular and then also of the Romans must remain the foundation of higher education. The perfection and the majesty of these masterpieces should be the spiritual bath and the secular baptism that gives the soul its first and lasting tone and tincture for taste and science. For this initiation, a mere external acquaintance with the ancients is not sufficient; rather, we must take room and board with them in order to breathe in their atmosphere, their ideas, their customs (*Sitten*), even indeed their errors and prejudices, and become natives in their world—the most beautiful that ever was. If the first paradise was that of *human nature*, then this is the second, the superior paradise, the paradise of the *human spirit* where it emerges like a bride from her bridal chamber in a more beautiful naturalness, freedom, depth, and untroubled gaiety.... I do not think I am claiming too much when I say that whoever has lived without knowing the ancients has lived without knowing beauty” (GW 10.459).—Unless otherwise noted, here and throughout, all translations from the German are my own.

7 See DWB 16, cols. 1238–48.

to universal (or universalizable) norms, enshrined as a principle in Kant's categorical imperative. He refers to the individual's conscientious, rationally mediated commitment to such norms as "morality" (*Moralität*). While morality depends on ethical life for its specific content and its universally binding character, ethical life depends on morality both for its actualization and its legitimation in a historically real society. This latter point is key. The institutions that collectively make up a society's ethical life must be constituted in such a way that individual subjects can rationally affirm them as expressing and promoting their own individual moral and political freedom (cf. PR §268). The ethical life of a society is defective to the extent that it fails to express and promote such freedom. Hegel thus identifies the rational and moral self-consciousness of the individual as the source of *formal legitimacy* for the social institutions and conventions that collectively provide the source of collective, *authoritative normative content*.⁸

The respective principles of authority and legitimacy are distinct and therefore do not logically entail that there be mutual harmony between them. Where the authority of supra-individual institutions predominates, it threatens to subordinate or repress the socially constitutive role of individual conscience and critical reflection, thereby also undermining those institutions' normative legitimacy. Conversely, where individual conscience and critical reflection are one-sidedly promoted to arbiters of the norm, they threaten to erode social cohesion and the very existence of normatively binding, content-determinate commitments. The plight of modernity, as Hegel sees it, arises because these two equally necessary principles of legitimacy and authority are locked in a competition undecidable on the basis of the Enlightenment's mechanistic understanding of nature and its equally mechanistic understanding of the general will as constituted on the basis of a "social contract" binding atomistically conceived individual wills.⁹ Hegel's ambivalent attitude toward Socrates may thus be said to be writ large in modern society, which finds itself gripped by an ambivalence toward both social authority and individual conscience.

⁸ See Moyar 2011, 3–14 and chs. 5–6; Pippin 2008, Part III.

⁹ See PR §75; also cf. PR §§100 R, 258; ENZ §544. On Hegel's critique of the social contract tradition see Patten 1999, 104–38; Avineri 1972, 81–114, highlights the contrast Hegel draws between social contract theory and the constitution of the Greek polis. In contrast, Neuhaus 2000 emphasizes the compatibility between the social contract approach and Hegel's recognition-based account.

1.3 *Socrates' Ambivalent Legacy in Philosophy and History*

In Hegel's eyes, Socrates personifies the historical origin of this ambivalence between authority and conscience in the breakdown of ancient Greek *Sittlichkeit*. On the one hand, he calls Socrates a "hero" for having introduced a "higher principle" in world-history: "This higher principle was justified absolutely. When it emerges in the contemporary world, it appears as necessary in relation to that other shape of spiritual consciousness that constituted the substance of Athenian life and the world in which Socrates came upon the scene" (TWA 18.514). On the other hand, Hegel affirms the justice of the Athenian court in prosecuting him:

The principle of the Greek world was not able to withstand the principle of subjective reflection, which thus emerged as hostile and destructive. The people of Athens were therefore not just justified, they were obliged to react against it with the force of law. They accordingly viewed this principle as a crime. Thus it is with the heroes of world history generally: in them a new world dawns.

TWA 18.515

Hegel therefore regards Socrates' fate as "genuinely tragic": "For tragedy occurs in the sphere of ethical life precisely when one right is pitted against the other—not as if only one were right and the other wrong, but such that both equally constitute rights, and the one is shattered in its collision with the other" (TWA 18.514).

The remainder of this chapter spells out the "Socratic" principle of subjective reflection in more detail and shows what is involved for Hegel in regarding Socrates as a tragic hero of world-historical significance. The next section (§2) focuses on the philosophical details of Socratic method, its principle, scope, and limit, and its underlying affinities with both the sophistical tradition and aspects of Kant's moral philosophy. Hegel regards Socrates not as opposing, but as in a certain sense perfecting Protagoras' *homo mensura* principle by insisting on the purposive nature of rational reflection and drawing out its "objectivist" or anti-relativist implications. I will argue for the merits both of that view and of Hegel's criticism of Socrates' intellectualism, which I illuminate by comparison with Hegel's charge of formalism against Kantian ethics and his scathing critique of Romantic irony.¹⁰

This last point already invites attention to the historical differences separating Hegel's post-Kantian framework from any conceptual scheme

¹⁰ Cf. Frederick (in this volume) on Schlegel's appropriation of Socratic irony.

that we could reasonably attribute to Socrates. Drawing on Hegel's theory of historical development, I argue that he is not guilty of anachronism, at least not any of the more simplistic variety. If, by Hegelian lights, reason is partly constituted by its history, how is that historicity manifest in Socrates' person? How are his trial and death intertwined with it? What does it mean to interpret Socrates' character and fate in terms of their world-historical significance? I devote the paper's third section (§3) to exploring these questions before concluding (§4) with observations on Hegel's infamous *Doppelsatz* (in the Preface to his *Philosophy of Right*), "What is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational" (GW 14.14), and how it applies to the case of Socrates.

2 Dialectic, Irony, Intellectualism: Sophistry and Socratism Critically Compared

This section of the chapter focuses on Hegel's critical appreciation of the "Socratic method" both in relation to the sophistical tradition and with a view to the specifically post-Kantian perspective that informs his reception of Socrates. §2.1 explains why, on Hegel's account, we should understand Socrates not as rejecting sophistical practice, but rather as deepening and completing it: Socrates' grasp of the *negativity* intrinsic to intellectual activity makes explicit a condition of possibility that was merely implicit in the practice of the sophists, while his insight into the *inner purposiveness* of thought helps link critical self-reflection to knowledge of what is objectively true and good. Nonetheless, Hegel is critical of Socrates' moral intellectualism, which he sees as failing to address the link between normative ideals and their realization in concrete social existence (§2.2). Establishing the nature of such a link is a crucial task for moral philosophy, and failure to do so has grave consequences. The section therefore concludes by examining how Hegel's criticism of similar failings among his contemporaries (notably, Kantian formalism and Romantic irony) frames his reception of Socrates, arguing that his sophisticated philosophy of history allows him to evade the pitfalls of anachronism in bringing present and past into critical dialogue (§2.3).

2.1 *Dialectic, Maieutic, Irony: Socratic Conversation and the Negativity of Thought*

Hegel is well-known for the high esteem in which he held dialectic, both as a methodology and as a metaphysical doctrine. In considering his reception of Socrates, the dialectical workings of the "Socratic method" thus furnish one obvious place to begin. We should note from the outset, however, that

Hegel rejects as misleading any characterization of Socrates' manner and style of conversation as a "method," finding rather that "the principle of his philosophizing ... is instead a manner that is wholly identical with Socrates' own peculiar character" (TWA 18.456; cf. 451).¹¹ Despite its susceptibility to schematic generalization, in other words, he does not regard Socrates' dialogical manner of inquiry as properly capable of formalization, depending as it does on context, content, and interlocutor. From an abstractly methodological point of view, such dependence might appear to constitute a limitation. Yet Hegel does not disapprove of it, perhaps because it serves to distinguish Socratic "method" from the skill the sophists promised to teach, the ability to argue well about any claim or manner of topic whatsoever. However, Hegel does regard Socrates' approach as laboring under a different kind of limitation, namely the failure to have advanced beyond the negative (critical, aporetic) phase of dialectical inquiry to a concrete, systematically developed, affirmative account of its "chief content": the "recognition of the good as what is absolute, especially in regard to action" (TWA 18.456). While Socrates' orientation toward "the good as what is absolute" equally serves to distinguish his approach from that of the sophists, he fails to give an account of the good that would be sufficiently concrete to guide action, and so he ultimately lapses into the same ethical contingency and conventionality the sophists embraced.¹²

In a typical Socratic encounter, Hegel distinguishes two main phases. Socrates initiates dialogue by seeking "to bring everyone to reflect upon his duties in some particular situation, either one that has arisen of itself or one he has brought about himself" (TWA 18.456–7). Then Socrates "leads his interlocutor away from the particulars of the case at hand to reflection on the universal; he causes each individual to think for himself, eliciting that person's conviction and a determinate consciousness of what is right—of the good, the true in and for itself, the beautiful" (TWA 18.457). The whole procedure exhibits a dual character. Its positive, *maieutic* aspect consists in "developing the universal on the basis of the concrete case and in bringing to light the concept that, in itself, is present in every consciousness" (TWA 18.457).¹³ The

11 Hegel's insistence on the peculiar individuality of the Socratic style has a further basis in his philosophy of history and understanding of the singular nature of Periclean Athens: see below, §3.1.

12 Hegel views Aristotle as having been more successful in recognizing the need for a more concretely determinate conception of the good and in identifying some of its sources and features: cf. TWA 19.149, 222; also see Ferrarin 2001, 348–69.

13 Accordingly, Hegel interprets the doctrine of recollection (cf. *Meno* 85b–86b) as an expression of the insight that the objects of rational thought and knowledge are already present in each individual rational being: cf. TWA 18.471–2.

negative, *ironic* aspect consists in “dissolving universals—that is, the merely nominal [*gemeint*] contents of thought or imagination that have been taken up immediately into consciousness and allowed to become fixated—by causing them to be confounded with each other and with the concrete” (TWA 18.457).¹⁴

These two aspects of Socratic conversation are fused in a way that renders it unique, constituting a genus of discourse that differs fundamentally from sophistic speech, significant similarities and points of indiscernibility notwithstanding. In marked contrast to the sophist, Socrates neither promises to impart any particular knowledge or skill nor claims to possess any knowledge of his own. While Hegel judges Socrates to be sincere in his profession of ignorance (in that he failed to develop his philosophical insight into a systematic science: cf. TWA 18.458), he also recognizes a valuable and productive *pragmatic* dimension in Socratic irony.¹⁵ For by comporting himself in a way that accords with the ignorance he professes, Socrates forces his interlocutor *actively to seek the universal within himself* (cf. TWA 18.457). The purpose is to “help bring the thoughts into the world that are already implicit in the consciousness of every individual—to start with concrete, unreflective consciousness and reveal the universality of the concrete or, alternatively, to start with what is posited as universal and show how it already contains its contrary within itself” (TWA 18.462). Hegel finds the prolixity with which Socrates coaxes universal insights from particular examples “tedious” (TWA 18.464), an exercise that has become largely superfluous for modern minds steeped in the element of abstraction (cf. PhG 11–13/PS §§4–8). However, he recognizes that Socrates’ exercises with his interlocutors are aimed at producing a power which, as a consciously cultivated skill, was newly emergent at the time and, once accorded full value, was to have revolutionary consequences: namely the power of self-conscious intellectual control over the concepts we use to describe and evaluate our practical affairs (cf. TWA

14 Note that “irony” here possesses a twofold meaning. Narrowly construed, it refers to Socrates’ manner in bringing his interlocutors to awareness of the latent incoherence and conditional nature of their own beliefs, and thereby to an awareness of the universality of reason; more broadly, Hegel understands it to refer to the presence of “dialectical” contradictions that are ineliminable from the make-up of finite existence itself, “the universal irony of the world” (TWA 18.460). In connection with Socrates’ manner of conversation, Hegel does not focus especially on the term’s etymological connection with *dissemblance*, taking Socrates instead to be motivated by sincerity (cf. Hadot 2002, 27, but also see Hadot 1995, 147–78, on the subject of irony and Socratic “masks”). Hegel’s scathing critique of Romantic irony as basically insincere, as a strategy for adopting maxims and modes of behavior without truly valuing or committing to them, starkly contrasts with his appraisal of Socrates’ dialogical intentions. Cf. §2.3 below.

15 Cf. Most 2007, 12.

18.464; cf. §3.1 below). Socrates' irony, narrowly construed as the master's conversationally adopted stance of ignorance, naturally accompanies his commitment to self-consciously active, reflective self-determination as the measure of whatever is to count as true, just, or beautiful.

Irony in this narrower sense, however, which Hegel views as "a particular style of person-to-person behavior" (TWA 18.458), is closely linked to irony in a broader, deeper sense. The self-determining activity that Socrates initiates in his interlocutors would not be truly free if it did not involve consciousness of thought's transcendence with respect to those among its contents that are merely contingent, conditioned, traditional, or historical. Socrates' irony thus consists in "accepting as valid whatever answer he is given, just as immediately presented and assumed. (All dialectic accepts as valid whatever is presumed to be so, and allows its internal self-destruction to unfold by itself—the universal irony of the world)" (TWA 18.460). The immediate effect of free, actively self-determining reflection is to bring to light the inner contradictions, incoherencies, and ungroundedness of *merely received* opinion, and it is therefore inseparably also awareness of a need for further philosophical reflection to achieve the universality, necessity, and rational grounding demanded by thought itself.¹⁶

We cannot overemphasize the importance of this concomitance between actively reflective self-conscious thought on the one hand and negation on the other. Hegel conceives "the tremendous power of the negative" as "the energy of thought" itself (PhG 27/PS §32) and as thus belonging essentially to it. On his telling of philosophical history, the sophists are among the first to have grasped the negative dimension of thought and to have sought to give it independent expression as a fully developed approach to reality. Hegel's account draws on key elements of his theory of mental activity:

It is Protagoras who identifies thought, as consciousness, with essential being, but what he means is consciousness precisely in its motion, the restlessness of the concept. Taken in itself, however, this restlessness is equally something stable and permanent. Now the permanent element in that motion is the I, a term that is negative in character insofar as it has the moving elements outside of itself. The I is indeed a self-preserving

16 Hadot characterizes Socratic dialogue as a "call from 'individual' to 'individual'" (29), while emphasizing that, "in order for a dialogue to be established which ... can lead the individual to give an account of himself and of his life, the person who talks with Socrates must submit, along with Socrates, to the demands of rational discourse—that is, to the demands of reason.... Caring for ourselves and questioning ourselves occur only when our individuality is transcended and we rise to the level of universality" (32).

entity, yet it exists only in and through its activity of negation, and for that very reason it is a merely particular entity (a negative unity) rather than a universal, whose defining feature is to be reflected into itself.

TWA 18.441

Here Hegel is agreeing with the insight he attributes to Protagoras: the true and the good, whatever else they may be, are essentially contents of thought; hence their being *thought* constitutes their essential *being*. Yet the signification of “thought” is importantly ambiguous. On the one side, it signifies the movement or activity of ratiocination, of comparison, abstraction, and reflection, that breaks down at-first-seemingly-unitary, free-standing contents of thought, reconstituting them as essentially dependent, relational terms whose distinct components are not guaranteed to compose logically coherent wholes. This Hegel refers to in the passage above as “consciousness,” and its immediate result is the destabilization of *prima facie* stable, unequivocal contents. On the other side, “thought” signifies what in Kantian terms is known as the unity of consciousness, that is, the apperceptive awareness of self-identity (the “I”) that a thinking subject brings about in itself as a concomitant of the activity just described. On this view, the I depends for its constitutive awareness of self-identity on its actively differentiating, “negative” relation to the given contents upon which it operates. As far as this conception goes, Hegel embraces it, but on his own view it does not go far enough. The ambiguity masks an important feature of thought’s relation *qua* “I” to thought *qua* “consciousness.” For although the “I” constitutes itself as an immediate psychological reality by actively relating to given contents in the manner suggested, mental activity has a higher, ultimately definitive goal that goes beyond the merely formal, psychological reality of apperception. That goal is to generate higher-level, universal concepts whose contents adequately reflect the specific structure and purposive character of the activity itself. This is what Hegel means by describing the I as a universal whose defining feature is to be “reflected into itself.” Formulated as the ideal fulfillment toward which all mental activity strives, such reflective content is called the true and the good.¹⁷

In Hegel’s eyes, then, Socrates represents at once both an important conceptual advance *within* the sophistical tradition and an advance *over* his sophistical predecessors and contemporaries. Yet he also views him as foundering on the same unresolved tension between individuality and universality, subjective autonomy and objective normativity that equally

17 Cf. Hegel’s remarks on the relation between dialectic and the “idea” at PR §140 R; I return to this point in §2.3, below.

plagues the original sophists, the later skeptics, and Hegel's own Romantic contemporaries.¹⁸ Let us consider each in turn, first the advance Socrates marks *within* the sophistical tradition, then his advance *beyond* it.

(a) *Socrates' advance within the sophistical tradition.* The privileged medium of sophistical communication is the exhibition speech (*epideixis*), designed to demonstrate rhetorical prowess to an audience consisting at least partly of potential students eager to learn the art themselves.¹⁹ Gorgias' *Helen* is a famous example.²⁰ Such speeches must have been apt to shake their audience's faith in traditional evaluative attitudes and received opinion, to which they issue a twofold challenge. First, at the level of semantic content, they attack common sense head-on, arguing directly for what is contrary to it. When discursive reason is deployed this way, the effect of subjecting belief to rational justification is to *relativize* it. The "strength" of a conviction—its truth or moral value—is made to appear to depend on the internal cogency of the available arguments rather than on some externally given, independent standard. In the absence of a sufficiently distinct conception of the relation between justification and truth, it may then come to seem as though contrary beliefs are equally true (or untrue), to the extent that cogent arguments can apparently be provided for them.

The challenge therefore also has a second, specifically pragmatic dimension that is especially evident in the theory and practice of *dissoi logoi* or "twofold arguments," which aim to argue contradictory sides of an issue with equal persuasiveness.²¹ By framing equally cogent arguments both *pro* and *contra*, the sophist may easily seem to be demonstrating his indifference to a discursive material he has reduced to what is, in effect, no more than a medium through which to manifest the sovereignty of thought.²² For many seem naturally to assume that one cannot argue for a position to the full degree of persuasiveness without also being persuaded oneself of its truth, that is, without believing in

18 For Hegel's views on ancient skepticism, especially in relation to Socrates and Plato, cf. his early treatise *On the Relation of Skepticism to Philosophy* (GW 4.197–238, esp. 210–20; Engl. trans. in di Giovanni and Harris 2000, 313–62, esp. 326–37); also cf. PhG 119–21/PS §§202–6. Hegel's criticism of Romantic irony is discussed below, in §2.3.

19 Cf. Plato's playfully derisive definition of the sophistical art as *epideiktikê* [*technê*]: *Sph.* 224b. Also see Arist. *Rh.* 1358b–1359a, 1367a–1368a, 1413b–1414a.

20 On the *Helen*, see Barney 2016.

21 For further background and philosophical relevance see Woodruff 1999. Hegel highlights the fundamental importance of the closely related "phrase" of the Pyrrhonists, "To every account an equal account is opposed" (Sext. Emp. *Pyrr.* 1.12, cf. 8–14; on the relation to *dissoi logoi*, cf. DL 9.106).

22 Gorgias thus concludes his *Helen* with the assurance: "I wished to write a speech which would be a praise of Helen and a diversion to myself" (80 DK B1; emphasis added).

it. To argue with equal persuasiveness for contradictory positions would thus seem to indicate either the absence of belief or the presence of irrationality. The practice of *dissoi logoi* thus harbors potentially disquieting implications. Either we are to infer that contradictory claims can be equally true (or at least equally commanding of assent), undermining the principle of non-contradiction and thus rationality itself; or that neither is really true or false (or suited to command rational assent), thereby undermining bivalence and relegating ethically relevant beliefs to the realm of mere convention, with no further basis in reality (*phusis*, “nature”) and hence no claim to be ultimately binding.²³

Presumably, the relativizing and initially equalizing effect that dialectical speech has on conventionally opposing values accounts at least in part for what Hegel has in mind when he refers to the “restlessness of the concept” and to the “negative unity” of the “I” insofar as it exists wholly through the mastery, subordination, or “negation” of determinate contents. Indeed, Socratic irony represents the very same negativity; the feeling of bewilderment and “paralysis” reported by Socrates’ interlocutors (e.g., at *Meno* 79e–80a) is a closely related skeptical effect. This notwithstanding, Socrates deepens the expression of thought’s essential negativity in two specific ways, and thus while his activity is continuous with that of the sophists, he also exploits connections among the conditions on which their practice is based, thereby extending both the practice itself and its possible aims. First, his dialogical and aporetic approach serves directly to waken his interlocutors’ own intellectual spontaneity, who thereby cease to be mere bystanders to discourse. The relativity and contingency of determinate contents and rationality’s own self-undermining tendency appear less as feats of logical or rhetorical “sophistication” and more like what Hegel believes them to be: consequences of the ubiquitous “energy” of thought itself and the “tremendous power of the negative.” The second point is closely related. The sophists juxtapose *dissoi logoi* externally, in a manner that fails to exhibit their necessary connection with one another. By failing to exhibit them in the form of antinomies, such that each *logos* entails its contradictory opposite, they also fail to make apparent their *essentially* self-contradictory nature. By contrast, Socrates largely abstains from enunciating propositions or furnishing contrasting claims in advance and then developing arguments for them separately. Instead, he first occasions his interlocutor to articulate a position and then, through artfully chosen questions, aids him in coming to

23 Cf. the views Plato makes the figure of Callicles (whom he depicts as Gorgias’ host) espouse: *Grg.* 483a–484c, esp. 483e. On the nuances of such conventionalist views of human social life, cf. Taylor and Lee 2016.

see how that very position entails contradictions that finally undermine it by reducing it to absurdity.

In this sense, the Socratic interrogation of common sense constitutes a form of *immanent critique* whose aim is to reveal the relativity, contingency, and negativity inherent to any content whose structure deviates from that of reason itself. Thus, while the concrete result of Socratic dialogue is frequently unsatisfying, that is very much in accord with its purpose, which, Hegel suggests, is precisely to *awaken the need* for philosophical reflection on and rational legitimation of the guiding principles of practical life (cf. TWA 18.466–7). Though Hegel himself also believes the good to be the principle not only of moral philosophy, but also of the philosophy of nature (since he takes nature to be teleologically constituted), he understands Socrates to have turned his back completely on natural scientific inquiry in embracing the good as the key to establishing a non-arbitrary conception of human convention (cf. TWA 18.472; *Phd.* 95a–100a). From this point of view, Socrates' appropriation of the sophists' "dialectical" strategies appears to be a means of defusing or indeed inverting the sophists' appeal to the opposition between *phusis* and *nomos*. For precisely by virtue of its nature-independent status, the realm of human action and its orienting values are both worthy and capable of receiving an objective order. While this order is indeed the product of conscientious human reflection, it is not for that reason tantamount to an expression merely of historically, socially, or otherwise contingent perceptions and desires.

(b) *Socrates' advance beyond the sophistical tradition: normative objectivity and the good as an end in itself.* Thought's ironic, skeptical, destructive, relativizing dimension constitutes a recognizably sophistical, "Protagorean" dimension common also to Socrates' manner of conversation, whose general point, Hegel says, is "nothing other than that he derived the truth of what is objective from its relation to consciousness, to the subject's activity in thinking—a point that is of infinite importance. As Protagoras said: the objective only exists by virtue of its relation to us" (TWA 18.442–3).²⁴ In other words, "Of all things the measure is man, of the things that are, that they are, and of the things that are not, that they are not."²⁵ The spirit of Socratism, as Hegel understands it, lies not so much in rejecting the Protagorean insight as it does in qualifying and completing it. "In Socrates, too, we find that man is indeed the measure, but only insofar as he is the activity of thought. Expressed

24 Indeed, Diogenes Laertius (9.53) asserts that it is Protagoras who "instigated the Socratic form of discussion."

25 Cf. 8o DK B1; Pl. *Tht.* 152a.

in terms of objectivity, the measure is the true and the good.”²⁶ The question is how to understand the Socratic qualification (“*insofar* as man is the activity of thought”) in a way that renders it distinguishable, on the one hand, from the subjectivism-cum-relativism Hegel attributes to Protagoras himself, and compatible, on the other hand, with the objectivity and universality Hegel clearly sees as essential to Socrates’ aim.

The key to resolving this apparent tension lies in the *inner purposiveness* of intellectual activity. The objectively true and good does indeed stand in constitutive relation to human consciousness, but not because it is a product of “mere” convention. Universality is the inner principle of human reason itself, and reason is driven to produce an adequate expression of its principle in the objective element of knowledge and value. To know oneself thus coincides with knowing what is objectively true and good: “Socrates’ principle is that, in order to discover his nature or calling [*Bestimmung*], his purpose, the final purpose of the world, truth, being in and for itself, man must search within himself, that it is through himself that he must arrive at the truth” (TWA 18.443).²⁷ Whereas the sophists mistakenly reduce the content of thought to its mere form, its presence to consciousness, and thereby relativize it, Socrates is credited for his “discovery” that “thought’s activity of positing and producing is at the same time the producing and positing of something that is not posited, something that has being in and for itself, namely an objectivity beyond the

26 Cf. TWA 18.472: “Socrates opposed the true, universal interior of thought (*des Gedankens*) to the contingent, particular interior. And Socrates awakened this individual conscience (*eigenes Gewissen*) by pronouncing not merely that man is the measure of all things, but that man *insofar* as he thinks is the measure of all things.” Most 2007, 6–7, interprets this as saying, “it was only *insofar* as he is a thinking subject that man is the measure of all things, i.e. that there is nothing that is real that cannot be the object of human consciousness.” But if we read the statement that way, it becomes hard to see how Socrates’ view is supposed to differ from Protagoras’. Most misses Hegel’s underlying thought: on the one side, reason is *constitutively* directed toward certain contents (the true, the good, the beautiful) as the uniquely satisfying objects of thought; on the other side, it is through the activity of rational thought (the production of the *logos*) that these contents are made actual in existence and thereby fully realized. It is possible to assert that man, *insofar as he thinks*, is the measure of all things, because this purposive relation obtains between thought and its unique satisfiers; truth, goodness, beauty thus stand to rational satisfaction in a constitutively normative relation. Most recognizes Hegel’s insistence that, in Most’s words, “Socrates must have had some vague intuition that of the good as a universal teleological principle” (12); yet because Most does not sufficiently consider the nature of thought’s constitutively purposive relation to its essential objects as Hegel conceives it, his own intuitions about the matter remain equally vague.

27 Thus Hegel’s interpretation of Platonic doctrine of *recollection*: nothing essential or substantial comes to the individual from outside; it is all the product of thought and must emerge from within individual consciousness; cf. TWA 18.471–2.

particularity of interests and inclinations, a power over all mere particulars” (TWA 18.444).²⁸ In other words, it is not this or that individual consciousness that is the measure of things, but reason as such whose nature serves to measure the adequacy of what subjective consciousness takes to be true and worthy of pursuit. It is the constitutive nature of reason to strive for adequate expression of the universal, and such expression is therefore not to be regarded as mere convention, but as the product of reason acting according to its own nature, and hence as a *second nature* on equal footing with physical nature or indeed superior to it (cf. PR §151).²⁹

2.2 *The Indeterminateness of the Good: Hegel's Critique of Socratic Intellectualism*

Hegel credits Socrates with having taken a significant step beyond the sophists' comparatively abstract conception of human reason as a merely formal capacity for ratiocination with no substantive nature or constitutive principles of its own. By introducing or “discovering” reason's constitutive, purposive relation to a privileged content (the true, the good), a content that it must itself bring into actual existence, Socrates originates a more concrete conception of reason.

The good is the universal; it is no longer so abstract, being produced by thought; instead of the *νοῦς* of Anaxagoras, it is an internally self-determining and self-realizing universal whose realization is at the same time an imperative—the good as the purpose of the world and of the individual.

TWA 18.467–8

However, despite Socrates' progress over the sophists in respect to the relative concreteness of his principle, Hegel regards him as having failed in one crucial respect:

28 Cf. TWA 18.467: “We must not blame the sophists for having failed to make the good their principle; it was merely the directionlessness of their age. Their age had not yet discovered the good, whereas now the good, the true, the just everywhere are regarded as basic. That [man is the measure] is *one* stage of cultural development (*Bildung*); but that the good is an end in itself, that is Socrates' discovery and his contribution to human culture and consciousness. It was no crime that others failed to discover it before him; every discovery has its time.”

29 Khurana 2017, esp. ch. 5, situates Hegel's conception of *second nature* in the historical context and vis-à-vis contemporary (notably neoaristotelian) approaches to normativity. See also Khurana 2016.

The principle is concrete in itself, but it has not yet been presented in its concrete determination. In this abstract point of view lies the defect of the Socratic principle. Nothing affirmative can be said about it since it lacks any further development.

TWA 18.468

Hegel therefore rejects what he sees as Socrates' moral intellectualism and sides with Aristotle, criticizing Socrates for having identified virtue with knowledge or insight. Quoting from the *Magna Moralia*, he writes:

"Forms of knowledge (ἐπιστήμας) all involve reason (λόγος), and reason is to be found only in thought. So that all the virtues, according to [Socrates], are to be found in the rational part of the soul. The result is that in making the virtues forms of knowledge he does away with the non-rational part of the soul, and hence also with passion (πάθος) and custom [Sitte] (ἥθος)," which are also part of virtue.... This is a good criticism.... What is lacking is what we can call the moment of being or of realization in general, and this is what Aristotle refers to as the non-rational. When the good has this reality as a universal reality, then, as a universal being, it is custom; and when the reality is that of an individual consciousness, it is passion.³⁰

TWA 18.474

Here Hegel is pinpointing the distinction between normativity and facticity, between that which merely "ought to be" and that which actually exists.³¹ If it is to be efficacious, the norm itself must have some kind of factual existence to which agents can look and to which real actions can be referred and compared, somewhat like the international prototype meter housed in Paris, notwithstanding the obvious differences between weights and measures on the one hand, and socially realized psychological dispositions on the other.

On Hegel's view, then, Socrates ultimately fails to develop an account of the reality and content of the good that would be sufficiently determinate for grasping either how it actually is or how it ought to be present in human affairs. We find the good urged upon us as a bare principle: legitimation through rational discourse; it therefore lacks the content it would require to guide thought and

30 Cf. Arist. *Mag. Mor.* 1.1 1182a15–20. Hegel inserts the Greek terms into his original text; the English translation (Barnes and Kenny 2014, 381–2) has been modified to reflect Hegel's German rendering of the passage.

31 Cf. Hegel's "Jacobi Review," *GW* 15.19 (English: Bowman and Speight 2009, 19).

action in the actual world. In terms of their practical consequences, then, Socrates' ethical views do not decisively distinguish him and his followers from the sophists they opposed. All alike, they exhibit symptoms of the decline of classical Greek ethical life: conventional *mores* have lost their unquestioned validity and the authority of tradition alone is no longer sufficient to restore it. Socrates does go further than the sophists in recognizing that rational discourse must be oriented and bound by a universalizable account of the good, and that individual insight must be such as to re-produce the universally binding norm it initially calls into question. But that recognition remains merely abstract, a mere matter of principle, without sufficiently determinate content or systematic elaboration. The aporetic character of many Socratic dialogues is one manifestation of this defect. In Socrates' defense of his life and opinions before the people of Athens and in his subsequent actions (§3.2), we shall find a further manifestation of the same defect.

2.3 *Kantian Ethics, Romantic Irony: The Context of Hegel's Critique*

Hegel's "Aristotelian" critique of Socratic intellectualism follows a pattern that originates in his critique of Kantian morality as one-sidedly formalistic.³² The moral law itself (Kant's categorical imperative) has no content of its own: it is an empty tautology (cf. 9.231–2). Therefore, it is fit to serve neither as a *generative* source of determinate maxims to guide particular moral actions nor as a *judicative* criterion by which to evaluate a maxim as morally good once it has been formed and put into practice (PR §135 R). This methodological defect mars Kant's doctrines of morality and virtue:

No immanent derivation of duties is possible from this standpoint; one can import content *from outside* in order to arrive at *particular* duties, but there is no transition from the [Kantian] determination of duty as an absence of contradiction, as merely formal self-consistency (which is nothing other than the fixation of abstract indeterminacy), to the derivation of particular duties, nor does it contain any principle by which to determine whether a given content that has been proposed for action is or is not a duty.

PR §135 R

32 Indeed, we find some of Hegel's earliest formulations of his critique of Kant's (and Fichte's closely related) conception of "morality" in the context of his contrasting idealization of classical Athenian political life, which he characterizes as "ethical life" (*Sittlichkeit*): cf. GW 4.434–5, 455; also see 402–3. The close tie between Hegel's Kant-critique, his vision of the ancient polis, and his understanding of the "Socratic" principle suggests the impact Socrates' legacy had on the development of his thought.

As Hegel sees it, this methodological defect is clearly not a question of purely academic, inner-philosophical interest, but one of vital practical urgency. For not only does the moral principle, in Kant's formulation, fail to provide sufficient guidance for moral action and evaluation; in *practice*, its theoretically uncontrolled dependence on socially and historically contingent content opens the door to sophistical justification or indictment of virtually any action at all (cf. GW 4.435, PhG 329, PR §135 R)—a degree of arbitrariness that clashes with ordinary conceptions of morality as much as it does with Kant's own moral rigorism.

Taken to its most extreme consequence, Hegel thinks, Kant's ethics of autonomy turns into the "Romantic irony" associated with the brothers August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel, the latter especially.³³ On the face of it, Schlegelian irony bears affinities to Hegelian dialectic: both are techniques that appeal to a tendency of "finite" or "conditioned" terms (be they concepts, standpoints, artistic genera, social institutions, or historical tendencies) to be driven beyond themselves by their own internal dynamic and to "pass over" into their contradictory opposite.³⁴ Furthermore, along with his concept of irony, Friedrich Schlegel seems to have developed his own conception of dialectic in the context of his early fascination with Plato. He notes: "The Greek name *dialectic* is very significant. The *true* art (not the mere semblance, as in Kant) of communicating the truth, of conversing and together seeking, *refuting* and *finding*, the truth (as in Plato's *Gorgias* [...])."³⁵ Schlegel's appreciation of Socratic irony is closely linked:

Socratic irony is the only thoroughly involuntary, and yet thoroughly deliberate dissemblance.... It contains and arouses a feeling of

33 Merleau-Ponty 1965, 47, also notes the importance of Romantic irony in framing Hegel's reception of Socrates. For a recent interpretation of the Schlegelian concept of irony, see Nassar 2015. On the commingling of Socratic and Fichtean elements in Romantic irony, see Most 2007, 4, and Frederick (in this volume).

34 Cf. Schlegel's *Athenaeum*-Fragment 121 (1798): "An idea is a concept perfected to the point of irony, an absolute synthesis of absolute antitheses, the continual self-creating interchange between two conflicting thoughts" (KFSA 2, 184; tr. Firchow 1991, 33). On the relation between dialectic and irony see Arndt 1992. In the present context it is noteworthy that Friedrich Schleiermacher, the first translator of Plato's complete works into German (1804–10), embarked on the project when Schlegel, who had sparked his interest in Platonic philosophy, suggested they undertake the translation together; after circumstances forced Schlegel to drop out, Schleiermacher went on to realize the project alone. See Arndt 1996, vii–xxii, and 2015.

35 The observation is taken from a 1796 notebook entry: see KFSA 18, 509 (cited in Arndt 1992, 259).

indissoluble antagonism between the absolute and the relative, between the impossibility and the necessity of complete communication. It is the freest of all licenses, for by its means one transcends oneself; and yet it is also the most lawful, for it is absolutely necessary. It is a very good sign when the harmonious bores are at a loss about how they should react to this continuous self-parody, when they fluctuate endlessly between belief and disbelief until they get dizzy and take what is meant as a joke seriously and what is meant seriously as a joke.

KFSA 2.160, tr. FIRCHOW 1971, 265

However, a closer look at precisely these apparent affinities reveals striking differences between the way these two philosophers understand the nature, purpose, and right use of the dialectic. While Hegel, too, recognizes Plato as the “inventor of the dialectic,” he places his emphasis elsewhere than Schlegel does, namely on Plato’s merit in having been the first to present the dialectic “in a freely scientific and hence objective form” (TWA 18.174). Hegel accordingly rejects precisely what Schlegel seems most to prize about ancient dialectic, namely its individual and, so to speak, *artistic* character: “The dialectic has often been cast as an *art*, as though it depended on subjective *talent* rather than belonging to the objectivity of the concept” (TWA 6.557). Whereas Schlegel takes Kant to task for having given a mere “semblance” of dialectic, Hegel credits him with having taken “the infinitely important step” of recognizing “that the dialectic belongs necessarily to reason” (TWA 6.558). Hegel therefore finds the Socratic dialogue to mask and at least partially distort the true nature of the dialectic: “With Socrates, the dialectic is of a piece with his general philosophical style in that it retains a predominantly subjective form, namely that of *irony*. Socrates’ dialectic was aimed at ordinary consciousness in general and then more specifically against the sophists” (TWA 18.174).

To Hegel, Schlegel’s “ironic” conception of the dialectic must have appeared as a fundamentally misguided and unsalvageable confusion of reason’s objectively dialectical features with irony’s personal, contingent, *ad hominem* features. In his discussion of Romantic irony in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel insists that “nothing but the name was taken from Plato,” for whom it refers exclusively to “Socrates’ manner of confronting the delusions of both naïve and sophisticated forms of consciousness in personal conversation”—never to a feature of the idea or objective reason itself (PR §140 R):

In the absence of any such directedness toward persons, the essential movement of thought is the *dialectic*, and Plato was far from mistaking the dialectic by itself, and certainly not irony, for the final word or indeed

for the idea itself; on the contrary, he insisted that the back-and-forth movement of thought, especially of merely subjective opinion, must finally terminate by merging into the substantiality of the idea.³⁶

PR §140 R; cf. TWA 18.461

The result of conflating dialogical irony with the dialectic of reason is a variety of evil, or indeed “*evil* in its fully general form” (PR §140 R). For although the romantic ironist “is aware of ethical objectivity, instead of selflessly giving himself over to it and acting out of respect for it, he distances himself from it in the very way he relates to it, aware that it is he who so *wills* and *decides*, and that he could *just as well* have willed and decided otherwise” (PR §140 R). Hegel imagines the ironist giving expression to his position, speaking thus:

You fully and honestly understand some law to have being in and for itself; I too am there in it with you, but at the same time I am also one step ahead of you, for I’ve also gotten beyond the law and can act *this way just as well as that*. The excellent thing is not the substance of the law, but I myself; I am master over the law and its substance, to *play* with it as I please and to *enjoy nothing but myself* as the highest is cast down from its height and engulfed within my ironical consciousness.

PR §140 R

As portrayed by Hegel, the romantic ironist bears an unmistakable resemblance to the sophist as characterized above. The sophist makes a *tour de force* of exposing the ethical content hallowed by tradition in its apparent contingency and thereby undermining its authority; the socially objective, conventional ethical order is made to seem *merely* conventional, apparent, and subjective, and in thus deflating it, the sophist elevates himself. The romantic ironist raises sophistry to the next higher power of self-conscious reflection: by the very fact of its actual, determinate, social-historical existence, ethical content is finite, conditioned, and hence unsuited for adequately realizing the non-finite, unconditional demands of morality; concrete ethical life is not merely contingent, it is *necessarily* contingent. Hence, though we must orient our actions toward *some* determinate ethical content, *no particular* content

³⁶ In a footnote to this passage, Hegel refers explicitly to A.W. and F. Schlegel.—It is useful to compare the contrast drawn here, between the “back-and-forth movement of thought” and the “substantiality of the idea,” with the contrast Hegel draws in his discussion of Protagoras between “consciousness” and fully actualized universality as “reflection-into-self” (cf. §2.1 above).

is any closer to the truth than any other, and hence none can ever command wholehearted allegiance. If the sophist could still be said to have retained some ground to stand on in preserving a conception of nature as opposed to nurture, the ironist has jettisoned even this support, diving headlong into nihilism and alienation.

Thus, as we glance forward from Socrates to Kant and back again from Kant to Socrates, the following dialectical situation comes into view. On the one hand, Socrates makes two signal advances over his sophistical contemporaries. First, by recognizing the dialectic internal to rational belief and ethical norms generally, he relocates the site of dialectical conflict and resolution from the external medium of adversarial speech to the internal medium of cooperative inquiry, where conscientious interlocutors seek to problematize contradiction and other forms of incoherence and thereby to identify the substantive conditions under which to move beyond them, ignorance of which being what first gave rise to the phenomenon of incoherence. Second, through his discovery of the good as an end, or indeed as *the* end in itself, Socrates introduces a rigorously unified, non-naturalistic, unconditional ideal by which to orient such inquiry. On the other hand, however, Socrates' one-sidedly intellectualist conception of the good lacks the mediation required to derive actual duties with sufficient content to guide action; Socratism therefore leaves the divide between social convention and the good as unbreachable as the sophistical gap between social convention and nature. Action in the real world is accordingly subject to a contingency bordering on the arbitrary. Once Socratism's close cousin, the Protestant-cum-Kantian principle of autonomous, individual, moral conscience, takes root as moral common sense, the Socratic aporia re-emerges in aggravated form: irony, alienation, nihilism as concomitants of a historically actual society which, unlike the classical polis, is *really* organized on the basis of atomic individuality, with little or no authority of tradition upon which to fall back. Socratism-cum-Kantian autonomy thereby relapses into sophistry-cum-romantic irony.

Hegel's critical stance toward contemporaneous moral philosophy (and its attendant moral attitudes) thus forms an important backdrop to his reception of Socrates. From one perspective, he can clearly be seen to be projecting eighteenth century concerns back into ancient thought. His procedure here is not, however, purely or straightforwardly anachronistic. To begin with, Hegel himself identifies the chief features he criticizes in Kantian morality—its formalism and its enthronement of moral individualism, autonomy, and conscience as the supreme principles of ethical thought—as concomitants of a wider, *specifically modern* disenchantment of nature: for the “moral worldview,” the world in which moral action must take place is “a completely

meaningless actuality" (9:324–5). Both the focus on the interiority of individual conscience (respect for the moral law) as opposed to social convention (mere concurrence with the moral law), and the strict dichotomy between nature (heteronomy) and rationality (autonomy) reflect historical trends that Hegel locates in northern Europe in the age of the Enlightenment and identifies with the spirit of Protestant Christianity (cf. GW 4.316). Indeed, the almost wholly uncritical embrace of classical Athenian political life that marks Hegel's social and political philosophy prior to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) is a direct response to what he sees as the impasse of modern moral and political life, institutionally as well as philosophically. No one was more acutely conscious of the deep difference between ancient and modern life than Hegel was.

Furthermore, by the time he writes the *Phenomenology*, Hegel has already begun to tell a story that traces the emergence of modernity back to its conditions in the pre-modern world, specifically in the collapse of classical Athenian "ethical life." And here Socrates plays a role that does not anachronistically reduce him to an Enlightenment philosopher *avant la lettre*.³⁷ Some important features of Socratism in this regard are his turn away from nature as a realm of mere mechanical (efficient) causality, mentioned above;³⁸ his appeal to individual conscience and sincerity as the source of moral legitimacy as well as philosophical insight;³⁹ and finally also the resulting underdetermination of moral duties with the attendant contingency of moral action and seeming relativity of moral justification, the danger of which Alcibiades and Critias brought home to the people of Athens (cf. TWA 18.490).

As true as it therefore undoubtedly is that Hegel is projecting his contemporary concerns back into the classical context, it is equally true that he is at once repeating and revising the oft-told narrative of modern Europe's emergence from antiquity's ruins. The modern world has arisen from the same dynamic of interiorization, individualization, and privatization that spelled the downfall of the classical world; in this respect the two are continuous. But whereas the irretrievable "beauty" of the classical world was shattered by the emergence of individual conscience and a keener sense of social-historical contingency, the modern world confronts this reality as the very element in which it exists, and it does so in light of a civic-republican ideal that could be

37 Cf. Most 2007, 8 and 11.

38 Cf. Socrates' criticism (*Phd.* 97b–99d) of Anaxagoras' approach to explaining the things of nature by appealing exclusively to efficient causation.

39 Cf. TWA 18.485: "For in Socrates' manner of proceeding, the decision will always be left up to the subject, conscience; but whenever [the subject] is bad, the story of Strepsiades will repeat itself"; also, 489–90.

born only once the classical republic itself had died. Socrates is the pivot on which Hegel's retelling of this history turns.⁴⁰

3 "A New World Dawns": The Historical Significance of Socrates' Character and Fate

The vividness of individual personality is, for Hegel, among the most striking features of Athens in its golden age. Of Socrates he writes:

He stands before us ... as one of those great plastic natures (individuals), cut from whole cloth, as we are accustomed to seeing in that period—a consummate work of classical art that has by itself ascended to this height. Such individuals are not made; what they were, they made of themselves, on their own; what they became is what they willed themselves to be, and they remained true to it.... The great men of that time are ... works of art themselves. The supremely plastic individual is Pericles, as statesman, and gathered like stars around him are Sophocles, Thucydides, Socrates, and so forth. Out of their individuality they have carved the existence that is their character, the dominant element of their essence, a single principle rendered articulate by the whole of their existence.... So too did Socrates, by his own devices and solely through the power of his self-conscious will, mould himself into this determinate character with its individual vocation and acquire his peculiar talent and skill.

TWA 18.452–3

Concomitant with this burgeoning of self-made individuality, however, is the awareness of a looming conflict between traditional *mores* and personal decision. Though Hegel clearly does not regard Socrates as the sole instantiation of such a conflict in the Athenian community of his times, he does regard Socrates' life and opinions as uniquely representative. This section therefore highlights the ways Socrates' life and character traits personify—and in some respects psychosomatically *embody*—the emergence of individual conscience in a society that had hitherto subordinated individual choice to traditional conceptions of one's station and its duties.

40 On the specific role played by the classical ideal in Hegel's search for a specifically modern form of republican government, see Buchwalter 1993; see also Bowman 2014.

3.1 *Socrates as a Historical Individual and the Significance of His Character Traits*

It is useful to begin by noting that the German word *Gewissen* (conscience) is manifestly related to *Wissen* (knowledge, awareness), from which it is distinguished by the perfective prefix *Ge-*, signaling fullness or completion; hence the closely related form *Gewissheit* (certainty).⁴¹ On rare occasions, as for instance in the following quotation, Hegel is content to use *Gewissen* to refer to whichever decision-making criterion may be consulted as authoritative, including a community's public *mores*:

There are cases in which we have perfect consciousness (*das vollkommene Bewußtsein*) that acting in accord with our determinate duties is not sufficient, since any concrete case will actually involve a collision of duties, a concretion of multiple determinations among which the moral understanding distinguishes, but which the spirit does not treat as though they were absolute, combining them instead in the unity of its decision (*Entschließung*). In such cases we refer to this pure decision-making individuality, to the knowledge of what is right, by the word *conscience*.... When it is the spirit of the people (*Geist des Volks*), we refer to it as custom (*Sitte*).

TWA 18.489

However, it is rare that Hegel thus extends the use of *Gewissen* to include custom and convention. As a rule, he follows modern German usage in restricting it to instances in which individuals arrive at a decision by consulting their own personal convictions and assessments of the situation.⁴² The passage just

⁴¹ On the etymology of *Gewissen* and its semantic relation to Latin *conscientia* and Greek *συνείδησις*, see DWB 6, col. 6219.

⁴² Hence the claim, in a different context: "Of the Greeks in the first, true shape of their freedom we may assert that *they had no conscience*; among them, the habit prevailed of living for the fatherland, without further reflection. They knew nothing of the abstraction of a state, so essential to our understanding; their purpose was defined by the living fatherland: this Athens, this Sparta, these temples, these altars, this way of living together, this circle of fellow citizens, these customs and habits" (TWA 12.309; emphasis added). Hegel concludes his remark by alluding to the sophists' role in introducing the principle of individual conscience: "It was the sophists, the teachers of wisdom, who first introduced subjective reflection and the new doctrine ... that each must act according to his own conviction" (TWA 12.309). On Hegel's assertion that "before Socrates there was no conscience," Most 2007 (7) comments that it "stagger[s] the imagination ... For Hegel, Greek ethical culture before Socrates is characterized as '*Sittlichkeit*,' as blind and unthinking obedience to the right: men were virtuous ... because it was their nature not to be capable

quoted continues by identifying Socrates as the historical individual who most exemplifies the shift of conscientious authority from the community to the individual and the concomitant restriction in the meaning of the term “conscience”:

This single universal spirit [of the people] comes to be replaced by the particular spirit.... Wherever particular laws come to seem ambiguous to consciousness, it is the subject who must make a decision and render them determinate. It is now up to the subject whether it be a good spirit or bad that makes the decision. In Socrates, this hitherto dimensionless point of individual decision (*Entscheidung aus sich selbst*), which among the Greeks had been an unconscious act of determination, started to grow and take shape. With Socrates, this decision-making spirit is relocated to the subjective human consciousness, and now the question is how this subjectivity looks in the case of Socrates himself. Inasmuch as the person, the individual, has become the agent of decision-making, we come back to Socrates as a person, as a subject.

TWA 18.489–90

The individual personality of Socrates thus takes on heightened cultural-historical significance: in a society of consummately “plastic” individuals, he stands—in *propria persona*—for the principle of moral individuality as such. Hegel accordingly pays due attention to the peculiarities of Socrates’ character and person, noting for example his public practice of philosophy, in the agora, as one of its essential features, and linking it to the republican virtue he calls “Attic urbanity” (TWA 18.455–6). Similarly, he associates Socrates’ rational mastery over the “vicious” nature betokened by his proverbial ugliness, with the freely self-wrought “plasticity” he sees as characteristic of Athens’s great individuals (TWA 18.452; cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.80).⁴³

of even imagining behaving in any other way.” Most overstates the point. Clearly, there were instances of disobedience and wrongdoing among the pre-Socratic Greeks as well as there are in our own day; to try to conceive that people of that time were incapable even of imagining transgressive courses of action would indeed “stagger the imagination.” However, Hegel’s point bears not on pre-Socratic Greeks’ depth of thought, liveliness of imagination, or engagement in the practice of demanding and providing justification for actions. Rather, it concerns the way they conceived the *source of normative content* and the *scope and limits of its authority*. For further discussion of Hegel’s assertion that the Greeks knew nothing of conscience in the modern sense, see Moyar 2011, chs. 3–4; Speight 2014.

43 Hadot 2002, esp. Part Two, emphasizes the central importance of self-mastery and personal transformation to the Socratic conception of *philosophia*.

On the other hand, despite his identification of Socrates as one of the chief discoverers and inventors of moral conscience, he insists that his ability to drink without becoming drunk was not due to moderation, enforced sobriety, or asceticism (as “the litany of moral virtue” would have it), but rather to “a power of consciousness that can withstand even bodily excess” (TWA 18.454).

The interaction of mind and body comes particularly to the fore in Hegel’s psychosomatic interpretation of Socrates’ recurrent trances. He describes them as

cataleptic states analogous or akin to somnambulism and magnetism, in which [Socrates] died away insofar as he was sensuous consciousness—a physical wrenching away of the inward abstraction from concrete, corporeal existence, a wrenching away, in which the individual separates off from his inner self. In this external phenomenon, we see proof of how the depths of his mind (*Geist*) were at work within him. Indeed, what we see in him is consciousness undergoing a process of interiorization, and here it takes on an existence that is anthropological in nature; with him, what is later to become habitual, takes on physical form as he is the first [to undergo it].⁴⁴

TWA 18.449

Most striking in this passage is the way Hegel links the historicity of nascent human attitudes and cognitive practices (such as methodical abstraction, conscientious moral reflection) with the historicity of the human body itself and its physiological states. Nowadays, he seems to be saying, we have acquired the habit of concentration, meditation, intentionally losing ourselves in thought, reflection, and so on. In the ancient world, however, this was less common or even unheard of. Socrates could therefore be said to have invented the practice, or rather to have been seized by it as an idiosyncrasy within his own body. It belongs to his individual nature to be susceptible to involuntary states in which his mind detaches itself from the body. Though this begins as an irruptive, involuntary state, it can gradually come to be cultivated as a practice; first, though, it has to enter into and become a stable part of human reality. Socrates is the historical individual in which this comes to be part of reality.

44 Cf. §2.1 above (p. 755) for a similar point about the prolixity of Socrates’ dialogical exercises in abstraction and the formation of general concepts, which was necessary for its age, but which modern minds are bound to find “tedious.”

Closely related is Hegel's interpretation of the Delphic injunction, "Know yourself," and Socrates' personal *daimonion*, which he situates in the particular world-historical phase of a transition within pre-modern culture itself to the incipient modernity of subjective interiority. Hegel contends that the ancient Greeks were unfamiliar with what we moderns think of as "conscience" or "subjective freedom" (TWA 18.493), the autonomous, individual capacity for making decisions and evaluating actions, on whose basis value is attributed to the individual in turn (cf. PR §147; TWA 12.309). Accordingly, in their public and private lives they frequently employed oracles as a means of decision making. The oracle at Delphi is clearly of special importance:

It was Apollo who presided at Delphi as the knowing God ... his supreme commandment was, "Know thyself!" What is meant is not knowledge of a single human's own particularity; rather, "Know thyself!" is the law of the spirit (*Geist*). Socrates fulfilled this commandment ... he is the hero who replaced the Delphic God with the principle that man knows within himself what is true; he need only look within ... The revolution is that the oracle has been displaced by man's own self-consciousness, the universal consciousness of thought present in each one of us.

TWA 18.503

Even so, it would be precipitous to infer that Socrates himself, in his historical context, grasped the momentous significance of this "revolution" in quite these abstract, modern terms. Though Hegel affirms that Socrates' accounts of his *daimonion* are to be taken literally, and not as a metaphor or bizarre conceit (cf. TWA 18.490–1), he interprets the *daimonion* as a quasi-pathological condition that was, so to speak, objectively forced upon Socrates by the fact that he was living and expressing an essentially modern (hence, future) state or disposition of mind in a cultural context in which it could not be fully formulated and normalized:

The *daimonion* stands midway between the externality of the oracle and the pure interiority of spirit; it is something internal, yet it is conceived as an independently existing genius, distinct from human will.... More specifically, then, Socrates' *daimonion* is a form akin to somnambulism, that doubling of consciousness; and Socrates does indeed seem to have been subject to something like magnetic states, since he is supposed often to have fallen into cataleptic and trance-like states.... Socrates experiences the first emergence of the return-to-self, which in him

therefore still has the form of a physiological state. This is the midpoint of the whole world-historical conversion initiated by the Socratic principle: the oracle has been replaced by the testimony of individual minds and the subject has assumed responsibility for its decisions.

TWA 18.495–6

Hegel goes on to underscore what we might call the historicity of these psychosomatic states: “Socrates experiences the first emergence of the return-to-self, which in him therefore still has the form of a physiological state. This is the midpoint of the whole world-historical conversion initiated by the Socratic principle: the oracle has been replaced by the testimony of individual minds” (TWA 18.496). The more striking peculiarities of Socrates’ character are therefore to be explained by the fact that he was living in what we might call the “pre-history” of our own culture of interiority, conscientiousness, rational decision-making, etc., in a time when these were not yet available as cognitive, reflective practices belonging to a general, public culture.

Hegel’s observations on the *person* of Socrates, on his individual physical and mental constitution, are thus guided by a twofold commitment: to his claim about the “plastic individuality,” singularity, and self-made character of the leading lights in Periclean Athens, and to his thesis that, in Socrates, the principle of reflective internalization or conscience comes for the first time to be *embodied*, in a literally *anthropological* sense deriving from Hegel’s views on historical development. However, the fact that Hegel places Socrates alongside other great “plastic natures” of fifth-century Athens, whose “whole existence” he regards as articulating “a single principle,” renders his final assessment of Socrates’ life and the manner of his death especially striking, indeed jarring: Just as Socrates failed *in theory* to unify the abstract principle of the good itself with the content of particular laws, maxims, or actions, so too did he fail *in practice* to take up a unified, internally consistent attitude and mode of behavior toward his fellow citizens, the people of Athens. In Hegel’s eyes, Socrates lived and died a contradiction, and this is nowhere more apparent than in his trial and, subsequently, in his conflicting attitudes toward the people’s verdict and the sentence of death, to which we turn in the next sub-section. Yet before we do, we may conclude the present section by remarking that, for a dialectician like Hegel, such a contradiction need not disturb the unity of Socrates’ character absolutely. For if that character sprang from the “single principle” of pure conscience, and if conscience, in its purity and opposition to “ethical life,” runs necessarily to contradiction, then only a self-contradictory existence could properly articulate it. That, as we will soon have further occasion to note, is the unavoidable flaw that renders Socrates’ character properly *tragic*.

3.2 *The Trial of Socrates*

The charges brought against Socrates were fair, his defense weak, the verdict just, and the death sentence he earned himself as the wages of pride. That, in a nutshell, is Hegel's opinion of the trial and execution of Socrates.⁴⁵

Though Socrates was not explicitly tried for espousing his philosophical principles as such, these were on Hegel's view clearly incompatible with the whole spirit of classical Athenian society; thus it was only right to prosecute him (cf. TWA 18.497). Equally, one might say they reflected a trend toward political irresponsibility and social disintegration that was already taking a toll on Athenian life. The misdeeds of Critias and Alcibiades, "Socrates' dearest darlings" and the latter especially a "genius of irresponsibility" (TWA 18.515), are to Hegel's mind no mere accidents; they are expressions of the ethical confusion inspired by Socrates as well as his sophistical contemporaries, but which was a general malady in fifth-century Athens: "Thus we see the most brilliantly gifted among them, e.g. Alcibiades, Critias, later playing roles that will brand them as enemies of their fatherland, traitors of their people, as subversives, indeed as oppressors and tyrants over the state—unhappy signs of confusion" (TWA 18.490). Their careers "cast an evil light on Socrates. For them, the principle of subjective insight had become practical; it was by this principle that they lived" (TWA 18.515). Unsurprisingly, therefore, Hegel acknowledges the accuracy of the unflattering portrait Aristophanes paints in the *Clouds*.⁴⁶

More specifically, Hegel judges the charges of impiety and corrupting the youth to have been brought against Socrates legitimately. The first charge is directly linked to the "revolution" mentioned above in connection with the Delphic oracle. By installing the individual conscience of mortals in the place of the immortal being traditionally associated with the oracle, Socrates takes a decisive step along the path toward disenchantment of the pagan world, undermining the traditional order of values. If he had been able, in his time and place, to give an account of what this revolution entails, he might have said: "What you think of as the gods really comes down to a misplacement or

45 Most 2007, 11, points out that, although Hegel characterizes Xenophon's account of the trial as "more exact and more faithful" than Plato's (TWA 18.477; cf. 519–20), he uses it to develop a criticism of Socrates and an argument for his guilt that is directly contrary to Xenophon's intentions in the *Apology* and *Memorabilia*.

46 Cf. 18.485: "The exaggeration for which Aristophanes is supposed to be responsible is just that he followed out the dialectic all the way to its bitter end; yet it cannot be said that he did Socrates an injustice in the way he represented him. Aristophanes is not at all wrong; indeed, we must admire the profundity with which he saw the dialectical side of Socrates as something negative and painted it (in his own way, of course) with such decisive strokes." On the place of the "Aristophanic Socrates" in post-Kantian German thought, see Most 2007, 13.

projection of human reason and conscience, which I hereby seek to restore to their rightful place.” That would in itself still have constituted atheism with respect to the traditional conception of deity and thus justified the charge of impiety. But as mentioned before, Hegel believes that in the cultural context of fifth-century Greece it was not possible to grasp and formulate the significance of the Socratic revolution in terms of a straightforward projection thesis of the kind later associated with Feuerbach.

The limitations imposed by the cultural context therefore causes displacement in the mode of expression, further aggravating the charges. In a culture that treats as externally existing realities what we today would more likely conceive as psychological forces or cognitive capacities, the decision-making capacity takes the form of a localized, universally consultable oracle associated with a particular deity. Socrates’ internalization of that same capacity thus appears even to himself in a partially external form and to others as the introduction of a new deity in competition with those the community has traditionally recognized:

With Socrates ... this knowledge ceased to be something externally posited and was integrated instead into consciousness itself, as it is with us, and yet not fully: for him, it retained the form of an externally existing voice rather than being the voice of individuality as such. It was not the decision that every individual has to make for himself (conscience in the ordinary sense), but a representation, as in the case of Jupiter, Apollo, etc. It therefore gave the appearance of being something both particular and idiosyncratic, rather than a universal individuality. His judges can hardly be reproached for refusing to stand for this, regardless of whether they believed him or not.... They were thus quite right in their indictment of Socrates.

TWA 18.502–3

As to the charge of corrupting the youth, Hegel finds that Socrates neglected to address the real point of the indictment, namely that his “moral interference” in the “absolute relationship between parents and children” is morally culpable (TWA 18.504, cf. 505–6).

3.3 *Socrates’ Pride and His Responsibility for His Death Sentence*

For the reasons indicated, Hegel finds the charges and guilty verdict against Socrates to be justified (cf. TWA 18.508). In his judgment of the death sentence meted out to Socrates, he similarly accords with the Athenian court’s conclusion. Yet whereas in respect to the charges themselves he seems to make

concessions to the conceptual limitations inherent in the cultural context shared equally by Socrates and his accusers, when it comes to the sentence he is more directly critical of what he sees as Socrates' pride and inconsistent attitude toward the court. "The judges found Socrates guilty with respect to the content of the charges brought against him, but he was sentenced to death because he refused to acknowledge the Athenian people's juridical competence, their majesty in relation to the accused" (TWA 18.498).

Hegel underscores the apparent marks of Socrates' overweening pride vis-à-vis the court.⁴⁷ Socrates refuses to suggest an appropriate punishment for himself, which might have consisted for example in a fine or, more seriously, in ostracism. For, as Xenophon observes, to have done so would have been tantamount to acknowledging his guilt (TWA 18.508–9; cf. *Xen. Ap.* 23). Yet as Hegel notes, at that point in the trial, the question of guilt had already been decided, and the only remaining questioned concerned the punishment (TWA 18.509). Hegel therefore concludes:

Socrates did not wish to humble (*demütigen*) himself before the people (*Volk*) in requesting that the penalty be remitted. The reason, then, why Socrates was sentenced to death and the sentenced carried out, was because he did not acknowledge the majesty of the people—and not as punishment for the offences of which he had been found guilty.

TWA 18.511

Socrates' pride in refusing to acknowledge the verdict stands in obvious contradiction to his insistence on submitting to the sentence. Hegel's attitude is characteristically ambivalent:

One may well construe his refusal [to flee the penalty] as an instance of moral grandeur, but on the other hand it rather contradicts what Socrates was later to say in prison: that he was there because the Athenians found it better so, and that he found it better to submit to the laws, and therefore did not wish to flee. But had he wished to submit, the place to start would have been in respecting the Athenians' verdict and acknowledging himself guilty. And had he been consistent, then he ought also to have found it better to impose a penalty on himself, for in doing so he would have submitted not only to the laws, but also to the judgment.

TWA 18.509

47 In his emphasis on Socrates' pride or indeed arrogance, Hegel seems to be following Xenophon, albeit in a quite different spirit: cf. *Xen. Ap.* 1.

Socrates' inconsistent attitude encapsulates the basic conflict of authority between moral conscience and ethical life. In a passage that is once again striking for the way it uncharacteristically extends the usage of *Gewissen* to include supra-individual conventions and institutions, Hegel sums up his assessment of Socrates' trial and death:

Socrates opposed his conscience to the judicial sentence and acquitted himself before the tribunal of his own conscience. But no people, and least of all a free people (a people of such freedom as the Athenians), is bound to acknowledge a tribunal of conscience, for it knows no consciousness of having fulfilled one's duty but the consciousness it determines itself.... For here the people are government, court, and the universal in one. And the first principle of a state in general is that there is no higher reason, conscience, rectitude, or what have you, beyond what the state recognizes as law.... The court ... is the privileged conscience ... and is not bound to recognize the particular conscience of the accused.⁴⁸

TWA 18.510–11

Here we see both the conflict between the authority of the public "conscience" and the claims of individual insight and conviction at its most pointed, and Hegel's unhesitating commitment to established public authority over the individual's conscientious objection, however well-founded it might seem to those situated—culturally, historically, or geographically—outside the body entrusted with passing judgment. Indeed, from Hegel's own point of view,

48 Whereas Hadot emphasizes the role of individual interiority in Hegel's critique of Socrates, here emphasis is placed on the aspect of individual self-assertiveness. Somewhat in passing and without providing a page reference, Hadot writes, "Hegel was thus wrong to say that 'Socrates flees within himself, in order to find the just and good there.' Instead, we shall agree with Merleau-Ponty [1965, 48], who wrote: 'He thought that it was impossible to be just by oneself. If one is just all by oneself, one ceases to be just'" (Hadot 2002, 37). True. Yet false to suggest, as does Hadot, that one must disagree with Hegel to agree with Merleau-Ponty on this particular point. Rather, Hegel criticizes what he sees as Socrates' presumption of the authority of his individual conscience *precisely because* he agrees that one ceases to be just in being just all by oneself. Hegel does not view Socrates as a "beautiful soul" who fled the world of actuality in favor of a merely ideal, internal communion with his own awareness of the just and the good; on the contrary, the unique significance of Socrates' "principle" lies for Hegel in its immediately practical relation to moral action in the real world, in the historical community to which he belonged: see TWA 18.512–13 and the discussion in the concluding section of this paper. Most 2007, 12–13, in turn, rightly understands Hegel to criticize Socrates' failure to move from the individual level to that of universality, but does not sufficiently consider the difference that move makes in terms of rational, authoritatively ethical content.

Socrates himself may well be said to have occupied a position external to or at the very least at the limits of mainstream fifth-century Athenian culture, a position moreover that was itself in important ways the epitome and fruit of that very community. Yet Hegel does not hesitate to blame the individual Socrates for bringing out the contradiction inherent in the very community that nurtured him.

Socrates' crucial failing lies, no doubt, in the vanity of his pride. He was able to see beyond the restrictions of the sophistical opposition between nature and convention with its attendant but unfounded dismissal of the latter as *mere* convention. Equally, he saw beyond the *merely* historical facticity of the conventions which, in his native city, defined the scope of piety. Nonetheless, on Hegel's assessment, what Socrates saw was also itself a *mere beyond*, vain in the sense of being void of determinate content beyond the abstract ideal of rationally evaluable truth and goodness. He saw far enough to reject the legitimacy of the Athenian people's judgment, but not far enough to contribute to establishing, *in fact*, a truer, more just, and equally authoritative norm in its place. Consequently, when it came to determining his course of action, he fell back, *realiter*, on commitment to the authority of the same historical community whose legitimacy he had, in refusing to acknowledge the verdict, *idealiter* rejected. But authority must be nothing if not real. And from Hegel's point of view, Socrates' singlemost failing was to have failed to grasp his own principle, the principle of self-consciously reflective, rational legitimation, in a way that could also have given it the reality demanded by and of political authority. In the end, Socrates had no better criterion for judgment and action than the sophists had proposed: the *de facto* reign of historically real convention, and on that criterion he was judged, sentenced, and—by his own hand—executed.

3.4 *Social Dissolution and Reconstitution: Socrates and Christ Compared*

In this context, one may be struck by Hegel's contrasting assessments of Socrates' and Christ's respective comportment toward the authorities who, in each case, passed the death sentence.⁴⁹ From Hegel's perspective, Socrates'

49 Most 2007, 5, points to the young Hegel's "lengthy comparison between Jesus and Socrates as oral teachers of a circle of disciples" in the posthumously discovered "Fragments on Popular Religion and Christianity" (cf. TWA 1.50–4, 82–3, 119–21), characterizing it as "a highly traditional comparison that recurs, usually in favor of Jesus, elsewhere in his later writings." However, it is important here to emphasize the disparity separating Hegel's mature views on the differences between Socrates and Christ from the view he took as a young man, which depended heavily on Kant's anti-supernaturalist understanding of Christ as a moral exemplar (AA 6.62–6). Hegel will later reject the idea of basing such

attitude toward the authority of the Athenian court and the laws for which it stands is contradictory: he refuses to acknowledge the verdict, but submits to the sentence his refusal has provoked. Hegel interprets it as a gesture of pride and refusal to humble oneself or be humiliated (*sich demütigen*) before the people. Even in submitting to the death sentence, Socrates continues to take matters into his own hands in what, to all appearances, Hegel judges to be an unacceptably self-assertive manner. And this assertion of the self as a purely *formal* reality with no determinate and universalizable content (propositional, normative, or ethical) is the basic source and locus of the contradiction Socrates embodies.

Hegel's critical emphasis on Socrates' pride in setting his own (merely formal) conscience above the authority of the community diverges starkly from the tendency, dominant in the Enlightenment, one or two generations previously to Hegel's, to heroicize Socrates as a martyr to justice, truth, and freedom.⁵⁰ Comparison with Hegel's interpretation of Christ's crucifixion further serves to cast his dissenting view on Socrates into relief. Christ's death, he writes, "in addition to being a natural death, is also the death of a criminal, the most dishonorable death on the cross, there is more in it than what is merely natural; it is a stripping away of civic honor, *worldly disgrace*" (TWA 17.290)—and thus the most extreme form of the humiliation to which Socrates refused to expose himself. But Hegel's point goes further than this, veering at first glance toward paradox: "To turn dishonor into the highest honor is to attack all the ties of human coexistence at their very root," he writes, "to unsettle and dissolve them.... To raise the banner of the cross ... is to withdraw man's inward disposition at the profoundest level from civic life and the life of the state, thereby removing their substantial basis" (TWA 17.290).

At one level, to be sure, the element of social dissolution at the heart of Christ's crucifixion is no different from that which Hegel associates with the Socratic principle of conscientious individuality. Differently from Socrates, however, Christ wholly relinquishes the demand for recognition as an

comparison primarily on Christ's and Socrates' roles as teachers of a circle of disciples, arguing that it misses all that is truly important (cf. ENZ §554; TWA 17.286).

- 50 Hegel explicitly targets the portrayal of Socrates's trial in Tennemann's *Geschichte der Philosophie* as an instance of superficial and anachronistic moralizing (see TWA 18.135, 497–8, 508; cf. Tennemann [1799], 2.25–87, esp. 39–41). On the attitudes typical of Socrates-reception during the Enlightenment, see Most 2007, 3–4, and Montuori 1981 (cited in Most 2007). The tendency to portray Socrates as a champion of intellectual and political freedom has not ceased to shape influential popular views of Socrates closer to our own times; Martin Luther King Jr., for example, cites him as an early exemplar of civil disobedience (King 1986, 294–5).

individual subject; indeed, from a theological perspective, he wholly divests himself of the divine majesty that is his birthright. The death of Christ is a social death and a spiritual death as well, a casting away of individual personality, an act of self-abasement and abjection to the point of annihilation. On Hegel's understanding, Christ's death and, subsequent to the resurrection, his ascension are crucial to the constitution of a properly Christian community.⁵¹ They symbolize, first, the necessity that the individual, in order to assume her true and essential dignity as the *formal* locus of what is right and good, cast off her pretensions to being a sui-sufficient, authoritative source of normative *content*. Secondly, they symbolize the necessity that the charismatic individual be removed from her position as the leader or focal point of a school or sect, in order that her universal significance not be misconstrued as a uniquely personal virtue, blocking, as it were, the community members' views of each other as the actual constituents of the ecclesiastic or political body.

Hegel's "Christian" vision of the right and the good is thus one in which both the community and the self-consciously reflective individual are reconfigured when the individual cedes authority to a community dedicated to preserving and upholding the dignity of the individual. Abdication and self-abasement here figure as preconditions for recasting the self in the image of the spiritual community or, writ large, in the image of *Sittlichkeit* as the ensemble of reason-conferring social institutions.

Socrates' proud refusal to submit to this condition marks his distance from Christ. Yet, under the cultural conditions of fifth-century Athens, neither could Socrates have acted otherwise. As Hegel says, "Socrates' fate was necessary" (TWA 18.496). For truly Socrates had but one community to which he could have and did in fact submit, and that was the Athenian community of proud, "plastic individualities." His flaw lay in his very strength as one such individuality. And for this reason, though Hegel is not prepared to honor Socrates as a martyr to truth and intellectual freedom in quite the sense in which the dominant line of reception has portrayed him as such, he does regard him as a tragic hero of world-historical significance.⁵²

51 Cf. TWA 17.303–5. Socrates sacrifices his life for the emerging principle of individual conscience in a society that constitutively puts the whole polity before the individual citizen, but he does so at the price of destroying the social order that nourished and raised him. Jesus, on the other hand, dies as an individual for the sake of establishing a community that equally cherishes each individual, but only at the price that each individual, renouncing himself, be reborn in the spirit of the community. For critical discussion of Hegel's contrasting assessment of Socrates and Jesus, cf. Bowman 2016.

52 Cf. Most 2007, 9.

4 Socrates, World-Historical Tragic Hero

Hegel is famous for many of his sayings, one of the more notorious being his so-called *Doppelsatz*: “What is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational” (GW 14.14). The statement occurs in the context of a discussion of Plato’s *Republic* and its relation to historical actuality. Interpretations run the gamut: where some see liberal progressivism, others see reactionary conservatism.⁵³ As my discussion of the interconnections as well as tensions between traditionally established authority and rational legitimation may already suggest, I resist interpretations that one-sidedly resolve the saying’s ambiguity in favor of either pole. In this concluding section, I consider how the *Doppelsatz* can serve to frame the “tragic” destiny Hegel attributes to Socrates, and how Socrates’ conflict with the people of Athens sheds light, in turn, on the meaning of the *Doppelsatz*.

4.1 *Hegel’s Doppelsatz and the Historical Split within Reason*

As we have seen, Hegel thinks the people of Athens were not merely justified, but compelled to try, convict, and punish Socrates with death, for he threatened all they stood for (cf. TWA 18.515, cited in §1.3 above). Strikingly, he also believes that the death sentence was the only way they could have done justice to the actual force and significance of what Socrates in his turn stood for.

After briefly entertaining a counterfactual course of events in which Socrates might have lived out his life in peace as a *Privatphilosoph*, quietly developing his doctrines and imparting them to his students, unnoticed by the state or a wider public, Hegel rejects the idea that such a fate would have been preferable, even supposing it could really have been possible:⁵⁴ “It was only by things ending the way they did,” he writes, “that [Socrates’] principle received the honor it was due. For ... it is ... an absolutely essential moment in the emergence of self-consciousness, destined to give birth to a new and higher actuality (*Wirklichkeit*)” (TWA 18.512).

At the heart of the matter lies the immediately practical significance of the Socratic principle, which constitutes something more than a *merely theoretical* foundation:

Indeed, *the principle itself entails that it have ... a bearing on actuality; therein, and more specifically in its conflict with the principle of the*

53 For a recent attempt to interpret the statement “neutrally,” see Stern 2006.

54 Though Hegel does not explicitly mention Xenophon, he is the classical proponent of the view Hegel is rejecting here.

Greek spirit, lies its true significance. And the Athenians paid it the honor it was due; they themselves rightly saw that the principle was directly related to their own actuality, that its relation was hostile, and they acted accordingly.

TWA 18.512–13 (emphasis added)

Given Hegel's conception of reason in relation to history, for him to say that Socrates' principle was "justified absolutely" (TWA 18.512) amounts to his affirming its *rationality*. By the *Doppelsatz*, that in turn implies its historical *actuality*. One can therefore say without paradox that, in combating (negating) the principle as hostile, the Athenians affirmed it as an opposing actuality. That, however, is equally to say that they re-asserted the actuality of the established religion, customs, and laws they saw threatened by it. Two actualities thus stand opposed, and hence (by the *Doppelsatz*) two reasons, two *rationalities* do so as well. That is why Hegel believes it appropriate to recognize Socrates' fate as involving the collision of equally justified (that is, *rational*), but opposing principles and hence as "genuinely tragic" (TWA 18.514).

But what can it mean to speak of two opposing rationalities, two opposing actualities? The *Doppelsatz* speaks only of *the* rational and *the* actual; whence the division and conflict?

Let us begin to answer this question by considering the case of rationality in more general terms. An agent is commonly said to be rational insofar as she acts or is disposed to act in light of *reasons*. Contemporary philosophers often distinguish between two kinds of reasons for action: *justifying* (or normative) reasons are those which (in a suitably determinate community of rational agents) anyone will acknowledge as making it *right* to perform a given action; *motivating* reasons are those in light of which a particular agent decides that a given course of action is good (for her) and then actually acts on that decision.⁵⁵ An agent's action is morally good when her motivating reasons are identical with the relevant justifying reasons. Drawing on this distinction, Dean Moyer has persuasively argued that Hegel's ethical and political thought is best understood as centering on what he calls the Complex Reasons Identity Condition: "An agent's motivating reasons stem from purposes that can be nested within broader purposes that provide the justifying reasons for the action" (2011, 74). More specifically, these "broader purposes" are norms and

55 On the history of this distinction see Dancy 2000.

values embedded in a community's "ethical life," that is, in its social and political institutions (such as family, commerce, and the state).⁵⁶

In other words, in a given community, the authoritatively binding, justifying reasons are those embedded in its actually existing forms of ethical life; and ultimately authoritative reasons would be those that would inhere in forms of life common to any community of rational human agents whatsoever. Conversely, however, for reasons *to be binding* is for them to stand in relation to individual agents who treat them as such, making them the motivating reasons for their actions.

Along these same lines, we might formulate a broadly Hegelian account of reason's historical development as follows. Once a society grows to a sufficient level of complexity, it appears inevitable that some of the norms and values embedded in its ethical life, together with the duties and imperatives to which they give rise, will collide, forcing the affected members of that society to reflect on the nature and source of those duties. Such reflection differs in kind from the reflection required in merely applying the imperatives (that is, in forming intentions to act in accord with them or in judging actions by their degree of conformity with them). In short, they will be forced to consider whether the duties in question *are themselves* justified, legitimate. This forces a split in rationality: the hitherto dominant model of practical rationality (conformity to and judgment on the basis of given normative content) is confronted with a species of rational reflection that arises from the experience of conflict, tension, or contradiction. This essentially *problematizing* species of reflection cannot in the beginning be anything but formal, for it is first occasioned by observing the *formal incompatibility* between given, normatively authoritative contents. Two distinct and opposing rationalities emerge: the reason-constitutive rationality of the ethical life-form over against a primarily formal, reflective, problematizing rationality. The society is then confronted with the task of reconstituting reason-constitutive rationality so as to reintegrate critically reflective rationality.

We can describe this same division in terms of actuality. Conditions within a historically real community can be such as to necessitate the emergence of the problematizing species of rationality (formal critical reflection), only in the presence of institutionally embedded, actually binding, authoritative content (that is, real duties that are perceived as such by the society's members). Otherwise, there would be no possibility of the collision or contradiction that provokes critical reflection. However, once summoned, the spirit of criticism, too, constitutes a social reality that is no less actual than the normative authority

⁵⁶ See Moyar 2011, chs. 2 and 6.

of ethical life. Actuality thus splits. On the one side, the formal, problematizing species of rationality recognizes the necessity of an *as yet indeterminate* norm by which to judge the legitimacy of the authority held by traditional norms of ethical life. That demand is in itself already the actualization of the higher norm, albeit in a manner that is indeterminate with respect to its content. On the other side, the conventional, content-determinate authority equally asserts its actuality as *the force of established law*. It is thus impossible that these two sides or principles should be actual without entering into an actual conflict of their own.

Indeed, critical rationality has its genesis in the conflicts internal to ethical life itself: it is the contradiction of ethical life become self-conscious.

4.2 *The Death of Socrates and the Fate of Reason*

Socrates is the self-consciousness of contradiction in Athenian life made flesh; his trial and death are the paradigmatic historical instantiation of this conflict of reason with itself:⁵⁷

The Athenian people had entered a period of cultural development (*Bildung*) in which individual consciousness splits off from the universal spirit and acquires a separate existence of its own. They beheld this in Socrates (they were right, and so was he), but they also felt that this would be their undoing. In him, therefore, the Athenian people punished a side of their own existence. The Socratic principle is not the offence of a single individual, but one in which Athens itself was implicated; it was a crime committed by the spirit of the people against itself.

TWA 18.514

Socrates' execution thus appears as a tragically fated turning point in the history of reason. For how could Socrates have evaded his fate? Only by failing *fully to actualize* that critical, problematizing rationality (say, by becoming or remaining a *Privatphilosoph*). The sophists had mistaken the nature of critical rationality by relativizing it to the individual (the individual person, community, species, etc.). Therefore, they did not represent the *full* actuality

⁵⁷ Cf. Khurana 2017, 519: "Die Herausbildung der zweiten Natur muss sich darum als ein dialektischer Prozess der Befreiung gestalten, der sich auch gegen sich selber kehrt und an sich selber abarbeitet.... Der Prozess dieser Befreiung liegt nicht allein in der Transformation der Bestimmungen unserer ersten Natur durch den Prozess der subjektiven Gewohnheit, der Erziehung und Bildung, sondern auch in der Befreiung von den auf unterschiedliche Weise naturhaft gebliebenen oder gewordenen Formen des sozialen Lebens, die uns die Distanzierung und Verwandlung unserer ersten Natur ermöglichen."

of critical rationality. By dying *in the name* of such rationality, without being able to assert any *particular content* that might have obscured the distinction between individual conviction and real social authority, Socrates attests to the actuality of the principle *as such* and in its *full generality*, thereby setting in motion the epochal process of reintegration between the two sides of rationality and the corresponding two sides of human actuality.⁵⁸

Socrates violated the spirit and ethical life of his people ... Equally, though, Socrates is also the hero ... the absolute right of spirit in its self-certainty, of self-consciously individual decision is on his side ... The collision of this new principle with the spirit of the people was bound to provoke the Athenians' reaction. But the punishment destroyed only the individual, not the principle itself; after its violation and negation, the spirit of the Athenian people was no longer capable of restoration. The punishment violently stripped away the false form of individuality from the principle that only later would rise and take on its true shape ... The principle achieves its truth only once it emerges in its universality as a shape of world-spirit.

TWA 18,511–12

Socrates' tragedy is the precondition of reconciliation—not between the actual and the rational, for these Hegel regards as inseparably one, but rather—between two constituent “moments” of rationality itself in its historical actuality: the authoritative content of normative forms of ethical life and the formal conscience of the individual moral agent. The reconciliation

58 Most concludes, critically: “Hegel restores philosophical dignity to Socrates, but finds no more satisfactory way to do so than by Platonizing him. For all his recognition that it was in fact not Socrates but Plato who introduced the Idea of the Good as a philosophically substantial concept, Hegel ends up defending Socrates' philosophical seriousness and world historical importance by claiming that he too had already possessed this same insight” (2007, 14). Most is right, but only once we qualify his conclusion by introducing an important distinction. For it seems fair to say that Socrates ascribed a kind of inner purposiveness to reason: its purpose was to examine our lives to the end of making them worth living. Furthermore, that no one knowingly pursues evil is part and parcel of Socrates' moral intellectualism; therefore, rational activity is teleologically directed toward the good. However, that is a merely formal conception of the good, not a “philosophically substantial concept” in the doctrinal sense in which Most intends that phrase. Indeed, *the absence of all individuable content* from the purely formal principle for which (on Hegel's view) Socrates sacrifices his own individuality, is precisely what sets him apart from both the sophist and the Romantic ironist and elevates him to a philosophical dignity uniquely his own. To say that Socrates dies for the sake of a principle with no positive content is by no means to deny that his death has positive significance.

presupposes the division. The actuality of reason-constitutive ethical life inevitably generates collision and internal contradiction, and nothing short of such collision can unleash the “tremendous power of the negative, the energy of thought” (PhG 27/PS §32) required to distinguish (*realiter* as well as *idealiter*) the normative actuality of the rational from its merely contingent existence as a particular historical community. For even if that community is so constituted as to represent a substantial realization of the “true spirit”⁵⁹ of ethical life, as Hegel believes the classical polis to have done, it fails to achieve the adequately self-conscious, “spiritual” realization of that spirit until critical reflection upon “this Athens, this Sparta, these temples, these altars, this way of living together, this circle of fellow citizens, these customs and habits” (TWA 12.309) has burned away their historically conditioned opacity to reveal that reason, fully integrated with itself, is the only actual authority. Such optimism lies in Hegel’s reception of Socrates.

Abbreviations

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

DWB *Deutsches Wörterbuch*

George Wilhem Friedrich Hegel

ENZ *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*

Cited by §. R = Remark, A = Addition

GW *Gesammelte Werke*

PhG *Phänomenologie des Geistes*

PR *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*

PS *Phenomenology of spirit*

TWA *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*

Immanuel Kant

AA *Gesammelte Schriften* (Akademie-Ausgabe)

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing

LM *Sämtliche Schriften*

Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel

KFSA *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe*

Friedrich Schiller

NA *Werke* (*Nationalausgabe*)

59 Thus the title of the section in the *Phenomenology* (BB.vi.A), in which Hegel presents the dialectic of the classical polis (PhG 240/PS §444). The account developed in this section represents a partial interpretation of that section.

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The Mills

Antis Loizides

[H]ad there been no Socrates, no Plato, and no Aristotle, there would have been no philosophy for the next two thousand years, nor in all probability then.¹



The British Utilitarians are not famous for their forays into classical scholarship. This is not for reasons of their lack of interest. Admittedly, Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) thought that Socrates and Plato taught “nonsense under pretense of teaching wisdom and morality.”² Yet Bentham’s skepticism about the history of philosophy was the exception. He spoke of Socrates and Plato, John Stuart Mill (1806–73) complained, “in terms distressing to his greatest admirers.”³ Those admirers, James Mill (1773–1836), George Grote (1794–1871)—the famous “Historian of Greece”—, and John Stuart Mill himself, were “Greece-intoxicated men.”⁴ Socrates was their hero.

Socrates was their hero for a rather specific reason. All ages, since that of Socrates and Plato, John Stuart Mill claimed, owe “whatever intellectual clearness” they have attained to Socrates’ method of investigation of truth.⁵ In short, as he put it, the “Socratic dialectics, so magnificently exemplified in the dialogues of Plato,”

were essentially a negative discussion of the great questions of philosophy and life, directed with consummate skill to the purpose of convincing any one who had merely adopted the commonplaces of received opinion, that he did not understand the subject—that he as yet attached no definite

¹ J.S. Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive* (1843), bk. 6, ch. 11 §3.

² Bentham 1834, 1.39.

³ J.S. Mill, “Bentham” (1838), *CW* 10.90. All works of J.S. Mill are cited from J.M. Robson’s (ed.) *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (1963–91), in 33 volumes.

⁴ For the phrase, see Bain 1882a, 94.

⁵ J.S. Mill, “Nature” (1874), *CW* 10.373. See also *Autobiography* (1873), *CW* 1.21–5.

meaning to the doctrines he professed; in order that, becoming aware of his ignorance, he might be put in the way to attain a stable belief, resting on a clear apprehension both of the meaning of doctrines and of their evidence.

J.S. MILL, *On Liberty* (1859) ch. 2 §33, *CW* 18.251

Many of John Stuart Mill's readers, then and now, would expect Socrates to receive mention in a work such as *On Liberty*—after all Socrates, “the man who probably of all then born had deserved best of mankind,” was the victim of a “memorable collision” with public opinion and authority.⁶ Unexpectedly, perhaps, John Stuart Mill gave Socrates' philosophical method itself a central role in his argument, turning it into a device in the service of vitality of beliefs.

To make sense of the place of Socratic dialectic in John Stuart Mill's works, especially as regards liberty of thought and discussion, commentators suggest, first, that communicative interaction on Socratic principles facilitates critical engagement with the opinions of others. Such engagement is not merely one of collision of ideas and of victory in an argument. Critical analysis does not simply aim to refute what others thought the right thing to do, even though it constitutes the “negative” function of philosophy. Rather, it aims to bring to the surface the evidence for those beliefs. A step-by-step clearing up of confusions inherent in beliefs held upon trust and the authority of custom, or of popularity, is the foundation of the realization of the individual as an autonomous actor. Commentators claim that for the younger Mill the Socratic method was not a means to indoctrination, as it reportedly was for the elder Mill. John Stuart Mill understood it as “a process of emancipation from mental passivity of any kind.” Commentators also suggest, second, that through such a process, autonomous agents can set their beliefs apart from those of the *agora*—even if these beliefs happened to coincide. These beliefs, being authentically their own, become a real positive force in their lives. This understanding of the Socratic method, commentators conclude, was the child of Romanticism, via Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), not of the Enlightenment. Commentators thus cast this as another example in John Stuart Mill's attempt to enlarge the utilitarian creed.⁷ Accurate as this description of the dialectical process in the younger Mill's works may be, I suggest that it underestimates the elder Mill's role in its development.

In short, James Mill and George Grote agreed with John Stuart Mill. That is surprising given what most think about the younger Mill's Romantic influences,

6 J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, *CW* 18.235.

7 See Urbinati 2013. See also Devigne 2006; Rosen 2007; McCabe 2014.

the elder Mill's Enlightenment heritage as well as his unimaginative and domineering tone, and Grote being "more a disciple of [James Mill] than of any one else."⁸ So, what did the two Mills and Grote think about Socrates? What did they take his method to consist in? How did that understanding come about? And what form did it take—if it did indeed take any form at all—in their views about political discourse? In this chapter, I try to answer these questions, though not necessarily in this order, and with less emphasis on Grote than his discussion of Socrates deserves.⁹ Still, this is not just a story of reception and appropriation. By focusing on the two Mills' views on the manner in which public discussion should take place, I argue that father and son were more in agreement than commentators seem to realize. In the first section, I try to show that, on the face of it, the elder Mill's discussion of Socrates did not show any of those elements which made Grote's and the younger Mill's discussions on the Socratic method distinctive. In the second section, I focus on the younger Mill's understanding of Socratic dialectics and its transformation into a logical tool to be used against social and political prejudices. In the third section, I turn to the elder Mill, bringing to the fore aspects of his thought on liberty of discussion that commentators typically associate with the younger Mill. In the final section, I suggest that the intellectual pedigree of the younger Mill's conception of the Socratic method can be traced to the elder Mill via their study of logic.

1 Pictures of Socrates: James Mill, George Grote, and John Stuart Mill

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, classics in Britain were a fertile ground for polemical applications. In English abridgements, translations, and histories of Greece and Rome, disagreements about classical texts served as proxy for disagreements about other issues. For example, Socrates was caught in the crossfire of both religious and political debates. On the one hand, a "radical" Socrates was recruited in the service of Freethinkers, Deists, and Unitarians against those who found a "pious" Socrates, a forerunner of Christian morality and theology.¹⁰ The comparison between Socrates and Jesus itself recurred throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In these debates, Christian morality usually, but not always, prevailed over

8 J.S. Mill to T. Carlyle 2 Aug. 1833, *CW* 12.170.

9 The only extended study of Grote is Demetriou 1999.

10 The picture is more complex than the one just sketched—for example, Unitarians would paint a "pious" Socrates while disagreeing with Trinitarians; see Poster 2009.

heathen philosophy. On the other hand, the question of constitutional reform on the aftermath of the American and the French revolutions made the fate of Rome and Athens relevant in British politics. In popular histories of Greece in the late eighteenth century, Athens was vilified and the British Constitution glorified.¹¹ Socrates was generally perceived as the victim of Democracy—readers who acknowledged a link between Socrates' life-long public teaching and the political stability and progress of fifth-century Athens were the exception.¹²

James Mill was an accomplished classical scholar. His *Commonplace Books* showcase an extensive ancient Greek and Roman reading. Ancient poets, historians, rhetoricians, and philosophers parade through the massive manuscript material.¹³ Plato's and Aristotle's works combined, for example, appear as frequently as Bentham's. Rarely did extracts from this collection of classical sources make their way to his printed writings, however. He published little on ancient Greek thought and philosophy—mostly reviews of translations, such as those on Thomas Taylor's English edition of Plato's works (1804).¹⁴ Still, James Mill assisted in shifting the focus from Rome in the eighteenth century to Athens in the nineteenth. He did so directly as one of the original members of London's Athenaeum Club—an exclusive club formed in 1824 boasting its Greek influences—and as part of its Election Committee which selected the first 100 members.¹⁵ He did so indirectly too. Members of the Athenaeum Club, such as George Grote, Connop Thirlwall (1797–1875), Edward Bulwer Lytton (1803–73), Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–59), and John Stuart Mill would be on the forefront of publications on the history and philosophy of ancient Greece from 1824 onwards.¹⁶

11 See J.S. Mill, *Autobiography*, *CW* 1.15, for James Mill warning his eldest son that democratic institutions were not always fairly represented in histories of Greece.

12 For a recent discussion on Socrates' and Plato's reception in early nineteenth century, see Loizides 2013a, ch. 2. For classic treatments on Victorian Hellenism, see Jenkyns 1980; Turner 1981.

13 James Mill's *Commonplace Books* (CPB) were a variously-organized manuscript collection of quotations, ideas, and short drafts (assembled from as early as his days at the University of Edinburgh) on a number of issues and themes. Volumes 1 to 4 of Mill's *Commonplace Books* are held at London Library; volume 5 at LSE Library Archives (Mill-Taylor Collection). Volumes 1 to 4, edited by R.A. Fenn and K. Grint, can be accessed at <http://www.intellectualhistory.net/mill>.

14 See Taylor 1804. See also J. Mill 1804 and 1809. I follow Robert Fenn's bibliography of James Mill (1987, app. 2).

15 Bain 1882b, 357. See further Black 2012, 59; Cowell 1975, 23.

16 For an early list of members, see *Rules and Regulations for the Government of the Athenaeum* (London 1840). For a discussion of works by these authors, see Loizides 2013a, ch. 1.

In his review of Taylor's *Plato* in 1804, the elder Mill was "happy" to quote from Cicero's *Academica* (1.15–16) a "full and accurate" account of Socrates: Socrates was the paradigm-shift philosopher who throughout his life remained devoted to the pursuit of virtue—while exhorting others to the same pursuit—and conducted philosophical discussions by ingeniously professing ignorance.¹⁷ Some ten years later, James Mill wrote another paragraph on Socrates:

The great reformer of the heathen world, the teacher of the purest morality, by which, independent of divine inspiration, mankind had been guided, Socrates, was not only of humble origin, but lived and died in poverty; and by his life of strenuous exertion in the service of mankind, as well as his death of calm and heroic suffering, when he was called upon to seal his doctrines with his blood, promoted the cause of truth, virtue, and human happiness, gave a new tone to the sentiments of mankind, and fired to the search and to the elevated declaration of truth some of the most distinguished men who have accelerated the progress of knowledge, and raised the views of mankind.¹⁸

J. MILL, "Clarkson's Memoirs of William Penn" (1813, 231)

Socrates was the martyr of philosophy—not of a philosophy in "the aerial regions of fiction and conjecture about things remote from the sphere of man" but of one "of real utility in human life," "the rules and motives of good conduct." Socrates fought hard against the sophists, leading them "on with infinite art completely to expose themselves, and to betray in the most glaring manner their ignorance, their presumption, and the absurdity of their principles."¹⁹ Typical as this Ciceronian take on Socrates was, the elder Mill's portrait of Socrates as a firebrand was not. His emphasis on Socrates' morality being "the purest" and "independent of divine inspiration," on Socrates being a "great reformer," promoting the "cause of truth, virtue, and human happiness," and on Socrates goading to the same task others who "accelerated the progress of knowledge" enlisted the elder Mill to that "party among the moderns" who—to "the discredit of revelation"—thought that "we need no further information respecting the object of our worship, and the principles of our duty, than what may be acquired in the Socratic school."²⁰

¹⁷ J. Mill 1804, 452.

¹⁸ The emphasis on Socrates' poverty and suffering suited Mill's aims in the article in which this passage appeared. He also referred to Jesus and Luther for the same reason. See also *CPB* 4.9r and 12v.

¹⁹ J. Mill 1809, 200; 1804, 451.

²⁰ Jackson 1802, 303–4.

In the mid-1820s, around the time he became a member of the Athenaeum Club, George Grote wrote a short essay on the character of Socrates. In this unpublished essay, Grote undertook to sketch the relationship between Socrates and the Athenians. The majority of the Athenians, Grote pointed out, “were witnesses chiefly to the striking dialectic assaults, to the upsetting of settled and dogmatical opinions.” Athenians watched Socrates proclaiming the “necessity of subjecting all opinions to a rigorous enquiry” while “impugning without reserve all authority, whether of poets, of teachers, or of ancestors.” As Grote tried to show, “judging from what they saw, [Athenians] could treat him only as a proselytizing skeptic—a character likely to be very odious to them.” Indeed, Grote noted, the negative and elenctic process was “a prelude to ulterior instruction, wherein positive results are to be established and endorsed.” Since most Athenians were “not privy to these final parts of the process,” what they thought of him must have been very different compared to what the select few, who “persisted in listening to his conversation,” thought and felt about Socrates, being attached to him “by the strongest feelings both of affection and of respect and of conscious improvement.”²¹

Three decades later, when Grote's *History of Greece* (1846–56 [= HG]) came to that chapter in the history of Athens which featured Socrates, the historian offered a hundred-pages long account of his life, character, and philosophy. Once again Grote insisted that it was a mistake to think that Socrates' worth lay in resisting the demoralizing tendencies of the sophists and the Athenian Democracy more generally. Far from being an anti-sophist, to the eyes of his contemporaries, he must have appeared a sophist first and foremost (HG 8.205). For Grote, despite a perceived mission from the Gods in the pursuit of wisdom, Socrates' great innovation and contribution to philosophy was “his attempt to draw the line between that which was, and was not, scientifically discoverable: an attempt, remarkable, inasmuch as it shows his conviction that the scientific and the religious point of view mutually excluded one another, so that where the latter began the former ended” (HG 8.227). Quoting Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (M.4 1078b25–35) and *Topics* (T.8 164b2–7), Grote argued that Socrates inaugurated the scientific spirit in moral inquiry by adopting an original method, consisting in an “analytical string of questions” as well as a “synthetical process.” The later, positive process, Grote added, “was one which [Socrates] did not often directly undertake, but strove so to arm and stimulate the hearer's mind, as to enable him to do it for himself” (HG 8.236–7). In short, Grote found a “Baconian Spirit” in Socrates' method: “there is a close pressure on the hearer's mind, to keep it in the distinct track of particulars,

21 For a transcription of Grote's essay, see Demetriou 1996a, 43–7.

as conditions of every just and consistent generalization; and to divert it from becoming enslaved to unexamined formulae, or from delivering mere intensity of persuasion under the authoritative phrase of reason." Socrates' method of question and answer, Grote went on, does not "plant in the hearer a conclusion ready-made and accepted on trust." The Socratic method did not answer its purpose "until that state of knowledge and apprehended evidence is created, out of which the conclusion starts as a living product, with its own root and self-sustaining power" (HG 8.255–6). Socrates' analytical cross-examination was directed at the accepted "ethical and political sentiment, with its unexamined common-places and inconsistencies" (HG 8.260–1).

John Stuart Mill's early education was famously such that his father could brag in 1820 that "[John] is not 14 years old till next May—and he is not only a good Greek and Latin scholar, but he has actually read all the Greek and Latin classics."²² As the younger Mill himself recounted, he had read Xenophon's *Memorabilia* with his father, imbibing "from that work and from [James Mill's] comments a deep respect for the character of Socrates; who stood in my mind as a model of ideal excellence." At that early age, "Plato's pictures of Socrates" offered a "poetic culture of the most valuable kind, by means of reverential admiration for the lives and characters of heroic persons: especially the heroes of philosophy."²³ It comes as no surprise that John Stuart Mill published abridged versions of translations of Plato's dialogues, exhibiting Socrates' method, in the mid-1830s²⁴ or that "Plato" was one of those subjects he and Harriet thought important enough for their "mental pematic" for future generations.²⁵ He was not six years old when he first starting reading Plato, in the original Greek.

Getting ready to review Grote's *Plato, and the other Companions of Sokrates* (1865), John Mill reread the whole of Plato.²⁶ Writing to Grote, he happily pointed out that "the chief occupation of this year has been with Plato, Sokrates, and you: and there could not have been, to me, a pleasanter one."²⁷ By the time he got actually around to writing his review, he did not think it possible, without losing other important material, "to discuss in the article Plato's precise relation to Sokrates. His relation to the Sokratic dialectic is the

22 J. Mill to A. Walker 26 Feb 1820, National Library of Scotland MS 13725 f.13v.

23 J.S. Mill, *Autobiography*, CW 1.49 and 115.

24 For the published and unpublished translations, see CW 11.37–238.

25 J.S. Mill to H. Mill, 7 Feb 1854, CW 14.152.

26 J.S. Mill to T. Hare 29 May 1865, CW 16.1061.

27 J.S. Mill to G. Grote 26 Nov 1865, CW 16.1121.

important thing.”²⁸ After all, John Stuart had already painted a vivid picture of Socrates in his 1850 review of his old friend’s *History*:

Socrates, in morals, is conceived by Mr. Grote as the parallel of Bacon in physics. He exposed the loose vague, confused, and misleading character of the common notions of mankind on the most familiar subjects. By apt interrogations, forcing the interlocutors to become conscious of the want of precision in their own ideas, he showed that the words in popular use on all moral subjects (words which, because they are familiar, all persons fancy they understand) in reality answer to no distinct and well-defined ideas; and that the common notions, which those words serve to express, all require to be reconsidered.... It is the fashion of the present day to decry negative dialectics; as if making men conscious of their ignorance were not the first step—and an absolutely necessary one—towards inducing them to acquire knowledge.

J.S. MILL, “Grote’s *History of Greece* [5]” (1850), *CW* 25.1163

He then added:

As the direct antagonist of such unsifted general notions and impressions on moral subjects, Socrates occupies an unique position in history; and the work which he did requires to be done again, as the indispensable condition of that intellectual renovation, without which the grand moral and social improvements, to which mankind are now beginning to aspire, will be for ever unattainable.

J.S. MILL, “Grote’s *History of Greece* [5]” (1850), *CW* 25.1164

For John Stuart Mill, there was an “urgent need, at the present and at all times, of such a teacher” as Socrates was.²⁹

2 John Stuart Mill on the Permanent Need for Socrates

Why did John Stuart Mill think that there is a need for Socrates “at the present and at all times”? Drawing on the Saint-Simonian view of historical process,³⁰ he

28 J.S. Mill to G. Grote 26 Nov 1865, *CW* 16.1120 and “Grote’s Plato” (1865), *CW* 11.382–3.

29 J.S. Mill, “Grote’s *History of Greece* [5]” (1850), *CW* 25.1163.

30 See further Guillin 2017, section 2.

considered his own time one of transition.³¹ It was an age in which “old notions and feelings have been unsettled and no new doctrines have yet succeeded to their ascendancy.” For that reason, it was also an age of “indifference, moral insensibility.”³² Thus, as he argued in 1832,

If there is any period in man's history in which the scientific study of the human mind is indispensable, it is at a period of moral transition like the present; when those general creeds, which had kept the diversities of individual character in subordination by a common rule of right, are breathing their last—and others, more adapted to the present condition of the species, are slowly and with difficulty evolving themselves out of the shapeless and tumultuous chaos of conflicting opinions.

J.S. MILL, “Smart's Outline of Semiology [1]” (1832), *CW* 23.425

Socrates' method could make sense out of the “chaos of conflicting opinions.” Once the majority rallies around a new doctrine, inaugurating a natural or organic age (that is, an age which is no longer transitional), the majority organizes “social institutions and modes of action conformably to itself.” Yet a danger exists, John Stuart Mill warned, in the majority impressing through education “this new creed upon the new generations, without the mental processes that have led to it”: the “stunting and dwarfing” of human nature.³³ Socrates' method was the cure to such stunting—it made a piece of knowledge “a living product, with its own root and self-sustaining power,” as Grote had put it. But how?

Precise meaning begins, John Stuart Mill argued, by seeking the meaning of abstractions in experience. Negative dialectics involves dissecting “large abstractions,” by “fixing down to a precise definition the meaning which as popularly used they merely shadow forth” and by “questioning and testing the common maxims and opinions in which they bear a part.”³⁴ The dialectical method has a positive or corrective function as well: the “direct search for the common feature of things that are classed together, or, in other words, for the meaning of the class-name.”³⁵ As we saw, for John Stuart Mill, Socrates aimed essentially at clearing up the confusions of an understanding “which has made

31 J.S. Mill, “Spirit of the Age [1]” (1831), *CW* 22.230–4. All works in this section are by John Stuart Mill, unless otherwise specified.

32 *Autobiography*, *CW* 1.259–60; J.S. Mill to G. D'Eichthal 15 May 1829, *CW* 12.32.

33 *Autobiography*, *CW* 1.259–60.

34 “Nature,” *CW* 10.373; “Grote's Plato,” *CW* 11.411; “Grote's Aristotle” (1872), *CW* 11.509; “Bentham,” *CW* 10.88.

35 “Grote's Plato,” *CW* 11.405.

up all its bundles of associations under the guidance of popular phraseology." Accurate classification of objects of "popular phraseology," extending beyond the received notions to their proper sense, their original idea, is a required addition to the method of dissection of arguments.³⁶ The value of the dialectical method is thus not confined to "drilling" and "dissecting" bad arguments. It can be applied to shared and frequent misconceptions; it aims at ascertaining truth with "the more accurate mode of sifting opinions."³⁷ He himself applied this method to "nature," "justice," and "liberty."

According to John Stuart Mill, Socrates and Plato applied a rigid mode of interrogation to the "vague generalities" of their own time. They were thus not "the master manufacturer[s] of nonsense," as Bentham had once argued. Rather, like Bentham, Socrates and Plato were reformers.³⁸ Their enemy was Commonplace—"the acceptance of traditional opinions and current sentiments as an ultimate fact."³⁹ "The most important application of the Socratic Elenchus, as exhibited and improved by Plato," John Stuart Mill thought, lay in critically examining the definition of abstractions which have

become entangled in so many foreign associations, mostly of a very powerful and tenacious character, that they have come to excite, and to be the symbols of, feelings which their original meaning will by no means justify; and which have made them one of the most copious sources of false taste, false philosophy, false morality, and even bad law.

J.S. MILL, "Nature," *CW* 10.373

Plato's Socrates tried to go beyond the received notions of certain ideas to their "proper" or "original" sense—through the analytic and synthetic operations. A "just and unambiguous definition of the subject-matter" could

only be arrived at by an operation which we should call a philosophical analysis, and which [Socrates] describes as a process of composition and decomposition, or rather decomposition and recomposition, first distinguishing a whole into its kinds or parts, and then looking at those

36 *Autobiography*, *CW* 1.25, 69; "Grote's *History* [5]," *CW* 25.1163–4; "Phaedrus" (1834), *CW* 11.95. See further Burnham 1977, 200ff.

37 *System of Logic*, *CW* 7.10–2 206–8; *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (1865), *CW* 9.370; "Protagoras" (1834), *CW* 11.44.

38 "Grote's Plato," *CW* 11.387; "Grote's *History* [II]" (1853), *CW* 11.329. See also *System of Logic*, *CW* 8.677; "Bentham," *CW* 10.88–90. Cf. Bentham 1983, 135–137.

39 "Grote's Plato," *CW* 11.403.

kinds or parts attentively, in such a manner as to extract from them the idea of the whole.

J.S. MILL, "Phaedrus," *CW* 11.93

Socrates did not take upon trust that the received opinions expressed the "truth." He showed that it was possible to identify and attack errors, without assuming his own infallibility.⁴⁰ And he was the example for the younger Mill's belief that "each person's own reason must work upon the materials afforded by that same person's own experience" and that "knowledge comes only from within; all that comes from without is but *questioning*, or else it is mere *authority*."⁴¹ Self-observation and self-interrogation were requisites to such a task.⁴² As Dana Villa has put it, the examined life "is a ceaseless struggle against the received truths of one's own society."⁴³

John Stuart Mill did not underestimate the force of tradition. He thought that tradition often has such a hold over people's minds that those who wish to challenge it are forced to practice dissimulation instead. At the same time, he acknowledged that people could only go so far in rejecting dear, or long-held, beliefs: "to break entirely with the religion of their forefathers would have been a disruption of old feelings, too painful and difficult for the average strength even of superior minds."⁴⁴ Socrates was a hero, by being "ready, for a worthy object" to do what was "painful and disagreeable." It was painful and disagreeable because he disrupted the "old feelings" that tradition had created; it was heroic because he was willing to "brook ridicule" and "brave evil tongues," without "torpidity and cowardice."⁴⁵ In Plato's dialogues, Socrates appears as one who was happy at the moment he broke "loose from error"—being that kind of person who "would just as gladly be refuted as refute," in order to combat prejudice or ignorance.⁴⁶ He sought the "truth" beyond the distorted images of belief so as to help his interlocutors do the same—"hinting" to them "what questions to ask," and stopping them when they were going in the wrong

40 "Spirit of the Age [I]" (1831), *CW* 22.233–4. See also, J.S. Mill to E. Bulwer-Lytton 27 Mar 1843, *CW* 13.578–9.

41 "On Genius" (1832), *CW* 1.332; "Grote's History [II]," *CW* 11.320–1.

42 "On Genius," *CW* 1.330–2; "Grote's History [5]," in *CW* 25.1163–4.

43 Villa 2001, 60.

44 *System of Logic*, *CW* 8.677; "Theism" (1874), *CW* 10.441; "Grote's History [I]" (1846), *CW* 11.286.

45 "Civilization" (1835), *CW* 18.131–2 and "Gorgias" (1834), *CW* 11.149–50.

46 "Spirit of the Age [I]," *CW* 22.233–4. See further, "Bailey on Berkeley's Theory of Vision" (1842), *CW* 11.269; J.S. Mill to E. Bulwer-Lytton 27 Mar 1843, *CW* 13.578–9.

direction.⁴⁷ Socrates embodied the love for truth and for the discursive mode of reaching and preserving “truth” as defined in *On Liberty*. Even though Socrates himself was an exception in his own time, with the “aid of suitable culture,” John Stuart Mill seems to have argued, everyone could become a Socrates.⁴⁸ The primary “aid of suitable culture” was acquiring habits of “reason” rather than “routine.” He thought that “the powerful dialectics which formed the intellects of the ‘Socratici viri’” had led them never to settle with opinions that originated in authority or routine.⁴⁹

In *A System of Logic* (1843), the younger Mill pointed to the utility of the Socratic *elenchus* in extracting suppressed steps in arguments, which altered the reasoning process and conclusion.⁵⁰ What was most important, logic needed to maintain its Socratic roots. John Stuart Mill was unwilling to follow his contemporaries in reshaping logic, who at the time were breaking new ground in formal logic by the quantification of the predicate. Having acknowledged that the “science of number” was the “grand agent for transforming experimental into deductive sciences,”⁵¹ his criticism of William Hamilton’s (1788–1856), Augustus De Morgan’s (1806–71), George Boole’s (1815–64), and William Stanley Jevons’ (1835–82) works on logic highlights just how much his understanding of the function of logic was Socratic. These men, he thought, had “a mania for encumbering questions with useless complications, and with a notation implying the existence of greater precision in the data than the questions admit of.” This kind of “mania,” he went on, was “one preeminently at variance with the wants of the time, which demand that scientific deductions should be made as simple and as easily intelligible as they can be made without ceasing to be scientific.”⁵² Logic was not meant only for a “school exercise.” There was philosophical value in what these logicians were doing, but John Stuart Mill questioned whether the results of their labors were “worth studying and mastering for any practical purpose”:

The practical use of technical forms of reasoning is to bar out fallacies: but the fallacies which require to be guarded against in ratiocination properly so called, arise from the incautious use of the common forms

47 “On Genius,” *CW* 1.332. See also, “Grote’s Plato,” *CW* 11.426, “Periodical Literature” (1824), *CW* 1.322, and J.S. Mill to R.B. Fox 10 Mar 1842, *CW* 13.520.

48 “Grote’s Plato,” *CW* 11.378; “On Genius,” *CW* 1.334; *On Liberty*, *CW* 18.251–2. See also Ryan 1991, 132–3; Villa 2001, 98.

49 *On Liberty*, *CW* 18.251.

50 *System of Logic*, *CW* 8.744.

51 *System of Logic*, *CW* 7.221.

52 J.S. Mill to J.E. Cairns, 5 Dec. 1871, *CW* 17.1862–3.

of language; and the logician must track the fallacy into that territory, instead of waiting for it on a territory of his own.

J.S. MILL, *A System of Logic*, bk. 2, ch. 2 §1n, *CW* 7.171n

Frederick Rosen has suggested recently that John Stuart Mill's "Philosophy of Error" (an extended discussion of informal fallacies) as developed in *A System of Logic* (bk. 5) was primarily an offspring of his early education in logic and in the Socratic *elenchus*.⁵³ "Lurking in the background," Rosen notes, John Stuart Mill's philosophy of error "fed into his other writings," "encouraging the beneficial dialogue between truth and error, which enabled truth ultimately to replace error in inference, deduction, and in argument generally."⁵⁴

In *A System of Logic*, John Stuart Mill had paid particular attention to the intellectual sources of erroneous opinions. Still, he stressed that "reasoning ill" had moral sources as well. Indifference to truth, for example, acts indirectly on a person, when she or he takes insufficient or inconclusive evidence to be sufficient or conclusive. In the case of bias, individuals "unfairly, giv[e] a larger share of [their attention] to the evidence which seems favorable to the desired conclusion, a smaller to that which seems unfavorable." Most people, John Stuart Mill argued, who willingly or unwillingly "blind themselves to the light of the truth," are not "strongly fortified" intellectually.⁵⁵ Logic served as "the great dispenser of hazy and confused thinking," clearing up "the fogs which hide from us our own ignorance" which "make us believe that we understand a subject when we do not."⁵⁶ Writing in 1850, he was thus certain that Socrates' work needed to be done again:

How can morality be anything but the chaos it now is, when the ideas of right & wrong, just & unjust, must be wrenched into accordance either with the notions of a tribe of barbarians in a corner of Syria three thousand years ago, or with what is called the order of Providence.

J.S. MILL to W. COULSON, 22 Nov 1850, *CW* 14.53

The "intellectual renovation" John Stuart Mill sought for would only be possible through inculcating reflective habits of thought and behavior—going

53 See Rosen 2006. See also J.S. Mill, *System of Logic*, *CW* 8.737, 740–830; *Autobiography*, *CW* 1.24–5.

54 Rosen 2006, 129.

55 *System of Logic*, *CW* 8.737–9.

56 "Inaugural Address Delivered to the University of St. Andrews" (1867), *CW* 21.239. See also Rosen 2006, 121–3.

after the “real” rather than the “apparent” meaning of the objects of “popular phraseology” which essentially shape our practice.⁵⁷

3 James Mill and the Critical Spirit of Socrates

In the previous section, I have tried to outline John Stuart Mill's definition of the Socratic method and to connect it to his discussion of the importance of the study of logic. As we saw, extracting suppressed steps in arguments, which altered the reasoning process and conclusion—was part of the “twofold obligation, to be able to maintain our opinions against the criticism of opponents and refute theirs, and never to use a term in serious discourse without a precise meaning.”⁵⁸ Socratic dialectic was more than just some philosophical exercise; it had direct bearing on how we live our lives—reason and evidence replaced tradition and routine as the source of one's beliefs, making these beliefs truly one's own. In what follows, I try to show that James Mill shared these ideas.

Myles Burnyeat has argued that James Mill was “more important for the history of Platonic scholarship than anyone has realized.” The elder Mill, Burnyeat pointed out, responded to—more than anything else in Plato—the “critical spirit of Socratic questioning.”⁵⁹ H.O. Pappé had already argued in 1979 that James Mill, concurrently with Schleiermacher treated Plato's dialectics “as a method of scientific inquiry as well as a practical instrument of education and inspiration.”⁶⁰ A number of scholars have followed up this thread since then.⁶¹

For James Mill, Plato's dialogues “are so much adapted to sharpen the ingenuity of youth, and engender the love of science and of virtue, that we know few things we should more ardently wish, than to see them become a general and favourite object of perusal in our native country.” There was no point in distinguishing between Plato and Socrates—there was no “dogmatic Plato” in contrast to a “Socratic Plato.” This was a bold position to take at the time—Joseph Priestley in 1803, for example, had tried to distance Socrates from Plato because the latter was largely associated with a mode of thinking which was foreign to the empirical, inductive, scientific spirit of the age.⁶² For

57 For an example in Mill's translations, see “Protagoras,” *CW* 11.57, 59.

58 “Grote's Plato,” *CW* 11.411.

59 Burnyeat 2001a, 109 and 2001b, 20. See also Burnyeat 1998.

60 Pappé 1979, 299.

61 Glucker 1987 and 1996; Demetriou 1996b; Giorgini 2009.

62 Priestley 1803. See also Poster 2009.

the elder Mill, as the “truly philosophic friend of Socrates,” Plato had nothing to do with his successors. In the attempt to enlist Plato’s authority to their writings, the “Alexandrian worthies” “dreamed” the Platonic dogmas—Plato’s ideas were often “misrepresented, for the benefit of jug[ernaut].”⁶³ Plato could indeed affirm some opinions more than others, the elder Mill thought. But these opinions could not form doctrines by themselves: Plato, “even in the most serious dialogue,” developed his expository arguments “only for a momentary or particular purpose” and “by no means as fixed and deliberate opinions.” “Plato,” the elder Mill thus pointed out, “in general adhered to the rule of his master; played with the theories of others, and advanced nothing seriously himself but what concerned virtue.”⁶⁴ And even though Grote and John Stuart Mill did not go as far as James Mill in blurring the lines between Socrates and Plato, they highlighted in the boldest possible colors Plato’s use and development of the Socratic method as his most important contribution to philosophy.

James Mill, as he himself notes, was quite excited by the prospect of a complete English edition of Plato’s works. He found his “expectations most woefully disappointed.”⁶⁵ The reason for the disappointment was simple. As he claimed,

It is peculiarly unfortunate for the memory of Plato, that his writings have come down to us involved in all the mysticism of those pretended expounders, who only made his name the vehicle for circulating more rapidly their own chimerical notions

J. MILL, “Taylor’s Translation of Plato” (1804, 455)

James Mill’s two reviews of Taylor’s Plato thus focused primarily on distancing Plato from his successors,⁶⁶ which in itself speaks volumes about his sense for what is important in Plato. Yet, the key to identifying concrete influence on Grote’s and the younger Mill’s characteristic rendering of the Socratic method is not to be found in the elder Mill’s rejection of the “Dogmatic Plato.”⁶⁷ It is found instead in the fact that the two Mills and Grote, as Burnyeat put it, “were

63 J. Mill’s note on his copy of Cudworth 1743, 1.19.

64 J. Mill 1804, 453 and 1809, 194.

65 J. Mill 1804, 451–2.

66 For a discussion of Taylor’s Plato and James Mill’s reaction to it, see Loizides 2013, chs. 2 and 3. See also Catana 2013.

67 For example, all three considered that Plato’s “The One in Many” and “The Many in One” was simply about classification. See J. Mill 1835, 25; J.S. Mill, “Parmenides,” *CW* 11.238, Grote HG 8.236.

leading members of a group called the Philosophic Radicals, who campaigned tirelessly (and with some success) to make Britain a more rational, more democratic, and more secular society than it was when they were growing up.”⁶⁸ In that campaign, logic was put in the service of change: personal, social, and political.

Throughout his writings, James Mill tried to highlight a tendency on the part of those who are affected by any proposition for change to resist it, even when the proposed change is a “means of procuring a new train of benefits to mankind.” As soon as such a proposal is heard, those who stand to lose by it, he argued, “come forward with an army of fears, proclaiming, that evil, not good, would be the unavoidable result”:

Speak of liberty in any of its shapes,—liberty of conscience, liberty of the press; speak even of extending the benefits of education to the great mass of the people; and you will be assailed with cries of mischief, with prognostications of danger, as if society itself were threatened with utter dissolution. Every step which the happiness of mankind has gained, it has gained through a conflict with those sinister auguries, and by a victory over their authors.

J. MILL, “Sur la Tolérance Religieuse” (1810, 414–15)

The route to improvement was by attacking those “useless, or rather pernicious common-places.”⁶⁹ The appropriate method for that task had already been sketched in Bacon’s *Novum Organum*. James Mill took a note of the following passage in his copy:

The induction which will be useful for the discovery and proof of sciences and arts should separate out a nature, by appropriate rejections and exclusions; and then, after as many negatives as are required, conclude on the affirmatives. This has not yet been done, nor even certainly tried except only by Plato, who certainly makes use of this form of induction to some extent in settling on definitions and ideas.

BACON, *Novum Organum* (1660, 113–4 [2000, 83–4])

James Mill alluded to this passage in his 1804 defense of the method of “Newton, Bacon, and all their followers” against Thomas Taylor’s remarks in his

68 Burnyeat 2001b, 20–21.

69 J. Mill 1810, 414–15.

edition of Plato's works about the limitations of the experimental, inductive method.⁷⁰

James Mill drew on Socrates of Plato's *Apology* to claim that it "is not by suppressing others [that one avoids being criticized], but by making [oneself] as good as possible."⁷¹ He thus attacked those in power (or power adjacent) for encouraging objections to be spoken only when they are easily refutable—while objections that could not be refuted were punished for their "obtrusion." A "candid spectator" in a public debate, he argued, would conclude that a given doctrine was irrefutable, merely because the real objections to it were not allowed to be heard. James Mill thought that when one backs an argument with supporting evidence, she or he ought to court objections rather than shun them.⁷² To put it in just one sentence, truth should be left "to the support of her own evidence." Thus, all members in a political community ought to enjoy freedom of discussion "in its utmost perfection." Such a freedom, he went on to clarify, "means the power of presenting all opinions, equally." "Every subject," he added,

has the best chance of becoming thoroughly understood, when, by the delivery of all opinions, it is presented in all points of view; when all the evidence upon both sides is brought forward, and all those who are most interested in showing the weakness of what is weak in it, and the strength of what is strong, are ... permitted, and by the warmth of discussion excited, to devote to it the keenest application of their faculties. False opinions will then be delivered. True; but when are we most secure against the influence of false opinions? Most assuredly when the grounds of those opinions are the most thoroughly searched. When are the grounds of opinions most thoroughly searched? When discussion upon the subject is the most general and the most intense; when the greatest number of qualified persons engage in the discussion, and are excited by all the warmth of competition, and all the interest of important consequences, to study the subject with the deepest attention.

J. MILL, "Liberty of the Press" (1821, 269–70)

The purpose of James Mill's series of questions and answers in this article was to stress that everyone must be the author of her or his own opinion—no one should let others, especially those who have power, choose for one's own

⁷⁰ J. Mill 1804, 460–1.

⁷¹ J. Mill, *CPB* 1.8r (on Plato *Apology* 39d). See also *CPB* 1.14r, 1.40v, 1.97v, 3.142v, 3.144v, 3.210v.

⁷² J. Mill 1812a, 218, 213.

self the “right” thing to think and do. “To command people to believe upon the word of another,” he noted in his private papers, “is to command them to degrade the human mind. This is the abasement of the human mind which belongs to a rude and slavish age.”⁷³

James Mill thus considered freedom of discussion, via the medium of the press, one of the most important securities (if not the most important) against the systematic violation of a person's, or a group's, rights. Postulating infallibility, he thought, exhibits a degree of insolence and presumption that removes whatever distinction a person claims for herself or himself: “What right has any man to say, that he alone is right, and others are in the wrong?”⁷⁴ He also thought the lack of controversy both a “misfortune to science,” as it allows received doctrines to maintain their status without appropriate grounds,⁷⁵ and damaging to the influence of moral agents in the community, such as religion. People forget, he pointed out, when Christianity “was supported by the pure force of its own evidence and its genuine effects on the lives of its followers, it flourished and spread”; but when it became the established faith, assisted by political power, “its progress was arrested” and “began to be corrupted.”⁷⁶ Critical engagement with the views of others fosters a mutually beneficial environment. There is no need to suppress the exchange of reasons in a debate: “Whensoever, in matters of truth, of argument, of reason, a man gives up argument, and takes to force, one of two things is certain; *either* he thinks the strength of the argument is not on his side; *or*, he is a tyrant who wants to do the work of reason by force.” It is thus “necessary for the friends of truth to persevere; to hold up the evidence of their cause to the light.” Even though disagreement excites attention to a cause—it draws “men to inquire,” it “kindle[s] zeal”—the exchange of reasons does not aim to victory over an antagonist. “As our only desire is, that men should see things as they really are, those who call upon others to look at them, though our antagonists, are our friends. They are our coadjutors; they contribute infallibly to the gaining of our end.”⁷⁷

The true end of freedom of thought and discussion is the improvement of mankind. James Mill thus believed that “mental partiality” was a formidable enemy to overcome in the pursuit of that end: “the habit which depraves the judgement, makes men bad reasoners, both for speculation, and for practice—Makes men bad husbands, bad fathers, bad judges, bad legislators, bad every

73 J. Mill, *CPB* 2.42v; see also 3.102v.

74 J. Mill 1812b, 115–7.

75 J. Mill 1815, 175.

76 J. Mill 1812a, 213.

77 J. Mill 1812a, 210–11.

thing. This is the very source of injustice." The way to combat prejudice and mental partiality is by "the vigilant habit of attending to evidence, and estimating accurately its force."⁷⁸ Opinions, he argued, "are the fathers of our actions." But our actions have consequences for others. To be indifferent whether our opinions are supported by evidence or not is to be indifferent about their consequences, and, in turn, to be indifferent about the well-being of others. To this effect, James Mill considered "forming opinions, and acting upon them without evidence," that is "taking up opinions that are current, or fashionable, with hardly any knowledge of their evidence, or much concern whether they are found on evidence or not," to be "one of the most immoral habits of the mind."⁷⁹ Yet, he did not think that the exchange of reasons or the bringing of evidence (or lack thereof) to light was always sufficient in the cause for improvement. In 1806, he urged his readers to remember that "it is a work of much difficulty to remove prejudices; and that men are not always blameable because they cannot relinquish them." For some people "no force of reasoning" could make them abandon their ungrounded beliefs.⁸⁰ Still, in his chain of reasoning, not caring for evidence and becoming "bad husbands, bad fathers, bad judges, bad legislators, bad every thing" were links not too far apart.

The clearest, though not the most famous, example of James Mill's argumentation method was his 1824 article on the *Quarterly Review*, at a time when periodical reviews shaped public opinion on issues of policy, legislation, art, and science. The radical tried to substantiate the claim that all that mattered to the *Quarterly Review* was the good of the ruling party. The guiding question for his assessment of the quarterly's conduct was "whether there is any thing in our institutions, and how much, which operates to the detriment of the people, and ought to be changed."⁸¹ The *Quarterly Review's* answer was essentially "Nothing." In the periodical's political articles, James Mill noted,

The people are represented as altogether vile, and any desires which they may exhibit to see the powers of government so disposed of, that they may have some security that these powers shall not be employed for the benefit of the aristocracy at their expense, as inconceivably wicked; as contrary, above all things, to religion; also contrary to law, and to order.

J. MILL, "Periodical Literature: Edinburgh Review" (1824a, 219)

⁷⁸ J. Mill, *CPB* 3.208v.

⁷⁹ J. Mill 1826, 13.

⁸⁰ J. Mill 1806, 363. James Mill gave a demonstrative appearance to his arguments in the debates he was involved in to try to convince those who were amenable to the prompts of reason. See Loizides 2018.

⁸¹ J. Mill 1824b, 468.

Quoting passages from articles from various numbers, he focused explicitly on their argument for the *status quo* on what he dubbed the *Quarterly Review's* "logic of power." He listed sixteen species (for example, misrepresentation, dishonesty, suppression of evidence, begging the question, argument from authority, appealing to fear, ridicule, and spite, etc.) of the "*Dirt-flinging argument*," as expounded in Jean Le Clerc's (1657–1736) *Opera Philosophica* (1698).⁸² He inserted numbers in quoted passages, showing how *Quarterly Review* fell back to assumption and abuse in their treatment of reform. Switching his Socratic questioning into full gear, he cited passage after passage trying to establish a pattern of misinformation, misrepresentation, and unbridled hatred concerning change and agents conducive to change (e.g., liberty of the press, parliamentary reform). To quote just one example of his logical dissection:

Figure (5) is prefixed to an assumption, that the mass of the nation are contented ["the mass of the nation will for some time longer persist in their preference of the old-fashioned government of king, lords, and commons, to that perfect state of political regeneration in which the absence of all abuses must put an end to their comfortable enjoyment of hourly complaint and remonstrance"]. This is directly contradictory to the assumption to which figure (3) was prefixed [i.e.: "We could not easily point out, in the whole course of our recollection, a single year during which the cowardly merit of being satisfied and contented with their condition could be fairly imputed to our countrymen"]. True; but this was necessary for the purpose of the Reviewer. And contradictions, though they are contrary to the rules of ordinary logic, are by no means contrary to the logic of power.

J. MILL, "Periodical Literature: Quarterly Review" (1824b, 469–71)

The timing of James Mill's dissection of the "logic of power" evinced in *Quarterly Review* was not incidental. In 1823, his eldest son emerged himself in local debating clubs using sharpened logical arms. The popular description of "a Benthamite, as a dry, hard logical machine"⁸³ did not take long to follow Peregrine Bingham's (1788–1864) 1824 edition of Bentham's papers on political fallacies. This was even more the case, when by 1826, Bingham and Charles Austin (1799–1874) set up *Parliamentary History and Review*, where

82 J. Mill 1824b, 466–8.

83 J.S. Mill, *Autobiography*, CW 1.110.

parliamentary debates were published, “accompanied by a commentary pointing out the fallacies of the speakers.”⁸⁴

James Mill’s article on *Quarterly Review* was just one of a number of essays on the debate on parliamentary reform in the 1820s, and just one of many attempts of critical analysis of an opponent’s use of vague, general terms in both the 1810s and the 1820s.⁸⁵ But the reason I chose this particular article for an example of his critical examination of an opponent’s claims was his extensive use of Le Clerc’s *Dissertatio Philosophica de Argumento Theologico ab Invidia Ducto*. Le Clerc’s logical treatise was the first to incorporate the Socratic method explicitly as a method of argumentation, something which constituted Le Clerc’s only claim to originality.⁸⁶

4 Eighteenth-Century Logic, Method, and Socrates

In the edition James Mill used, the chapter preceding Le Clerc’s *Dissertatio* was “De Socratica disceptandi Methodo.” According to Le Clerc (§1–2), Socrates employed the most noble method, both ancient and modern, in the search after truth. There were three rules involved: first (§4), the questioner must have a real desire for truth in a communicative interaction with another person, even with an opponent—no one must be so presumptuous in thinking that others have nothing to teach to them. Second (§5), before directing objections to an interlocutor, we must be sure that we have understood our interlocutor correctly: only a fool would assent to a proposition that she or he does not understand or allow the use of obscure words. Finally (§6), in the search after truth, we must take an opinion apart and study it in its details—that is, examine the particulars of our interlocutor’s doctrine and trace their consequences. In short, Le Clerc thought (§7) that the guiding question to the examination of the views of a friendly or unfriendly interlocutor is simply “on what grounds are you basing your view?” We must follow the steps of the argument, stating it clearly without leaving any doubt as to either our interlocutor’s doctrine or its foundation.⁸⁷ The reader of Le Clerc, reaching the chapter on Socrates in Part IV, would have already read about these three rules in Part III which dealt with questions of method (ch. 4, §110–12), especially the method of Analysis and Synthesis, or the method of resolution and composition. These terms were

84 J.S. Mill, *Autobiography*, *CW* 1.121.

85 See Loizides 2019, ch. 5.

86 Howell 1971, 304.

87 Le Clerc 1698, 263–75 (pt. IV, ch. 9).

used by John Stuart Mill to characterize Socrates' method, as we saw, but not by James Mill—at least, not in his extant writings.⁸⁸

In eighteenth-century textbooks on logic and rhetoric, the method(s) of Analysis and Synthesis was acknowledged as both the method of scientific investigation and the method of the communication of the results of that investigation. In the late eighteenth century, the elder Mill had the opportunity at the University of Edinburgh to be taught firsthand about this method by Dugald Stewart (1753–1828), Professor of Moral Philosophy and James Finlayson (1758–1808), Professor of Logic. The focus here is on the latter, but not solely on account of the subject-matter of his professorship—Le Clerc was after all an authority in eighteenth-century logic textbooks.⁸⁹ Even though Stewart did try to distinguish between the method of Analysis and Synthesis as used by the Greek geometricians and as used in what he called “Inductive Philosophy,”⁹⁰ he did not make a reference to the Socratic method as either one of the two variants. Adam Smith (1723–1790) and Hugh Blair (1717–1800) discussed Analysis and Synthesis as the methods of teaching; both of them considered Socrates as a sort of archetype practitioner of the analytic method and Aristotle that of the synthetic method.⁹¹ Finlayson was the only one to refer to the Socratic method as one which mixed both Analysis and Synthesis.

In his lectures on logic in 1795–96, James Mill's professor followed the lecture on Analysis and Synthesis with a lecture on the Socratic method, being “in its form a mixture of the Analytic and Synthetic methods.” Finlayson stressed that the Socratic method, although “admirably fitted for removing Prejudices,” “is rather a mode of teaching known truths than of Scientific Investigation.”⁹² Finlayson had already discussed the method of Analysis, or of resolution, in the traditional matter: taking a body as found in nature, “compound and adulterated,” and resolving it in its component parts. Analysis is also the method of invention; that is, once we ascertain a particular truth, we ascent to establish a general one. The method of Synthesis, or composition, follows the reverse order: tracing a simple body through all its compositions. It is also the method of teaching, by descending from general truths to particular ones. Finlayson pointed to three rules—departing little, if at all, from those of

88 I expand on James Mill on the Analytic and Synthetic method in Loizides 2018.

89 Hutton 2015, 46. See further Howell 1971, 299–345. For examples of unacknowledged translations of Le Clerc's chapter on the Socratic method, see Newbery 1789, 175–85; Gildon 1714, 260–4. Compare also with Watts 1768, 168–72.

90 Stewart 1814, 289.

91 Smith 1983, 146–7; Blair 1789, 2.362–3.

92 Lee 1795–96, 1.219–20.

Le Clerc's—pertaining to both methods: the evidence must (i) be present in every step of the process; (ii) reach conclusions only with clear and determinate ideas; and (iii) begin with things that are simple and best known and gradually proceed to obscure and unknown things.⁹³ The Synthetic method is strictly followed in mathematical sciences; in other sciences, Finlayson's auditor noted diligently, "Analysis and Synthesis are often blended."⁹⁴ What is more, during the same course, Finlayson presented Plato as one who tried to bring together the different philosophies of his predecessors; as such, the tenets of Plato, "being derived from so many different sources," could not be expected to "coalesce into a plain System." The obscurity owing to such variety made it very difficult to ascertain Plato's real tenets. Finlayson nevertheless made a three-fold division of Plato's philosophy: the Contemplative ("Theology, Geometry and Physics"), the Dialectical ("the Doctrine of Evidence") and the Practical ("Moral Philosophy").⁹⁵

Le Clerc and Finlayson are thus quite relevant in the story of the intellectual development of John Stuart Mill's ideas on liberty of thought and discussion. As we saw, both George Grote's and John Stuart Mill's unconcealed admiration of Socrates had much to do with the importance they bestowed to Socrates's philosophical method. Perhaps, it was to be expected that these two men shared a particular understanding of the Socratic method. Around the time the younger Mill was translating Plato and Grote writing his short essay on Socrates, both of them formed part of a reading group at Grote's house who took up the study of logic—thanks to these meetings, the younger Mill began putting his ideas for a book on logic on paper.⁹⁶ However, the adoption of Le Clerc's and Finlayson's vocabulary—Socratic dialectic as a method of analysis and synthesis combating prejudice, presumption, and obscurity via an emphasis on evidence—by Grote and the younger Mill suggests a greater role for James Mill in the formation of their ideas on the Socratic method than has hitherto been acknowledged.

93 Pollock 1796–97, 4.11–37.

94 Lee 1795–96, 1.213.

95 Lee 1795–96, 1.44–5.

96 For Mill's account, see *Autobiography*, CW 1.123, 167. The last book which they studied was James Mill's *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* (1829)—the elder Mill had entered into the analysis of the various bearings of established terms, such as power, wealth, dignity, virtue, among many others.

5 Conclusion

According to George Grote, the elder Mill was “the one who stood least remote from the lofty Platonic ideal of Dialectic.”⁹⁷ Grote’s compliment, however, entailed a rather unconventional understanding of Socrates’ and Plato’s method. As John Stuart Mill put it, “the title of Platonist belongs by far better right to those who have been nourished in, and have endeavored to practice Plato’s mode of investigation, than to those who are distinguished only by the adoption of certain dogmatical conclusions.” Both James Mill and John Stuart Mill were thus Platonists. And Plato, John Stuart Mill thought, “whether as the interpreter or continuator of Sokrates, can never be severed from him.”⁹⁸ Both of them seemed to think that the Socratic method was “unsurpassed as a discipline for correcting the errors, and clearing up the confusions incident to the *intellectus sibi permissus*, the understanding which has made up all its bundles of associations under the guidance of popular phraseology.”⁹⁹ As I suggested in the final section of this chapter, this understanding of the Socratic method had a long history, enmeshed in an inductive methodological tradition and the study of logic. Even though the younger Mill was admittedly impressed with Friedrich Schleiermacher’s discussion of Socrates,¹⁰⁰ he was already exposed to its ideas via an alternative route. John Stuart Mill did admit, after all, that even though most of his father’s “reflections were beyond” his “capacity of full comprehension” when they were delivered—in their daily walks and across their study—“they left seed behind, which germinated in due season.”¹⁰¹

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97 Grote 1866, 283.

98 J.S. Mill to G. Grote 26 Nov 1865, *CW* 16.1120, and “Grote’s Plato,” *CW* 11.382–3.

99 J.S. Mill, *Autobiography*, *CW* 1.25. For the phrase, see also Grote HG 8.254. The *intellectus sibi permissus* is Bacon’s concept of a mind left (riskily) to its own unfettered devices.

100 J.S. Mill to T. Carlyle, 5 Oct. 1833, *CW* 12.181. Schleiermacher’s essay, “The worth of Socrates as a Philosopher,” was translated by Connop Thirlwall and published in *Philological Museum* 2 (1833), 538–55. See discussion in Ausland (this volume).

101 J.S. Mill, *Autobiography*, *CW* 1.11 23–25. See further Loizides 2013b. I am grateful to Christopher Moore for reading and making insightful comments on earlier drafts of this chapter. This chapter is part of the dissemination activities of a research project on James Mill’s political thought funded by the A.G. Leventis Foundation, Cyprus 2017–19.

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Kierkegaard's Socratic Way of Writing

David Schur and Lori Yamato

This chapter looks at Søren Kierkegaard's (1813–55) engagement with Socrates by considering the Danish thinker's graphomania in the context of Socrates' silence. Kierkegaard's reception of Socrates is in an important sense an attempt to confront the relationship between Socrates' unpublished investigations and their written aftermath. Partly as a response to Socrates, Kierkegaard develops a written legacy that refracts his voice into an excess of self-consciously constructed perspectives. By creating such an overwhelming proliferation of self-critical and self-effacing voices, Kierkegaard strives to sustain a distinctly Socratic attitude of ignorance, an attitude that eschews commitment to fixed opinions. Although Kierkegaard is at ease calling Socrates "my teacher" (PV 55), the most important Socratic teaching for Kierkegaard is the recognition of one's own ignorance, and therefore one's own lack of authority to teach. For Kierkegaard, the acknowledgement of ignorance becomes an attitude of humility and penitence in the face of Christianity. And in Kierkegaard's writings, this Socratic ignorance is summed up by his repeated insistence that he writes "without authority."

From the time of his earliest works, Kierkegaard emphasizes that Socrates never speaks to us directly. Socrates, he stresses, remains essentially silent, reaching us only through second-hand accounts, filtered and distorted through the written perspectives of Xenophon, Plato, and Aristophanes (CI 9). Kierkegaard writes that "silence" is Socrates' "whole life in terms of world history" (CI 11). This sort of silence, the silence of a philosopher who did not address posterity by speaking for himself in writing, can be understood to mirror Socrates' reluctance, recorded in the second-hand accounts, to speak as a knowledgeable authority. As K. Brian Söderquist succinctly puts it, "Kierkegaard's Socrates does not secretly possess the truth—he is genuinely ignorant, and thus can offer nothing to replace the illusions he dispels" (2013, 352–3). If we accept Socrates' claims to ignorance, then they are substantiated by his reluctance to fix his opinions in written form.

Rather than remain unpublished, Kierkegaard emulates Socrates by writing like Plato. The way that Kierkegaard drowns out his own authority in a maelstrom of voices owes much to Plato's way of writing about Socrates. It is an approach to writing that radically renounces authority by submerging and

disguising the author's voice. Plato does this in a variety of ways. To take a prime example, Plato never speaks for himself in the first person in the dialogues that he wrote. His Socrates, meanwhile, is what we today would call a literary character, a figure who speaks in the writings of someone else, a screen behind which the historical Socrates remains mute. In addition, Plato's Socrates is extraordinarily self-critical, and when he does provide an extended explanation of an important matter, as in Diotima's speech in Plato's *Symposium*, it is itself often presented as a hand-me-down account. Socrates' missing footprint gives way to a stampede of printed utterances in Plato's dialogues, so to speak, but however much we may expect or desire this Socrates' speeches to be replete with answers, he is resolutely inconclusive. Plato's version of Socrates is not only relentless in his search for answers but also extraordinarily hesitant about accepting them. Thus Plato's dialogues strike a peculiar balance between Socratic silence and speech, and this confluence of humility and relentless questioning heavily informs Kierkegaard's writings.

In his attempt to write in the wake left by Socrates' absence, Kierkegaard confronts questions that continue to puzzle modern academic philosophers: How might one disentangle an authentic Socrates from writings *about* rather than *by* Socrates? And how are we to understand Plato's use of the dialogue form, in which Socrates is a character who seems to diffuse Plato's own voice of authority? But instead of simply wrestling with the extant written record, which Kierkegaard does explicitly do in his early dissertation on irony, he ends up adding to it and adding himself to it. Although he often adapts strategies of authorship from Plato in order to sustain a Socratic mission, Kierkegaard tends to bypass Plato's role as a crucial mediator, so that Kierkegaard does not so much imitate Plato as supersede him in a first-order effort to create an ongoing Socratic (rather than Platonic) enterprise.¹ The book *Stages on Life's Way* (1845), which will be considered in more depth below, is a telling case in point; it contains a complex restaging of Plato's *Symposium* that effectively writes the (already-absent) figure of Plato out of the picture. Kierkegaard replaces Plato as the absent authorial voice that brings Socratic dialogue to life. Formal structures such as pseudonymity and fictional narrative thus assist Kierkegaard in creating a unique, visionary, and revisionary incarnation of Socrates in writing.² Such structures distance Kierkegaard from his publications, so that he

1 Edward F. Mooney has observed a Socratic motivation in Kierkegaard's adaptation of stylistic tactics found in Plato, tactics that allow for the "unanchoring" of authored statements from the strictures of authoritative, "credentialed testimony" (2007, 21–24).

2 See Pedersen's discussion of strategic, contradictory "procedures" that Kierkegaard often uses as part of a "movement toward 'authorial' effacement" (1989, 101–2).

resembles Socrates in his absence from the written record, Plato in his absence from the Platonic dialogues—and Socrates in his reluctance to make claims to knowledge in Plato's dialogues.³ And insofar as Kierkegaard's authorship may be viewed as a totality, more extreme instances of distancing, such as the pile-up of voices and narrative levels in *Stages*, contribute to his general movement away from a direct and expository position of authority in all of his writings.

1 Authorship

The idea of an “authorship”—a carefully and strategically curated legacy of published writings—is crucial to Kierkegaard and utterly foreign to Socrates. The contrast can help us to understand Kierkegaard's reception of Socrates because Kierkegaard gives so much weight to writing per se. After all, Socrates was by no means silent when he was alive; if anything, he was unusually and perhaps fatally vocal. But because Kierkegaard is viewing Socrates from the position of a committed writer, he reads the earlier thinker's disinclination to publish as a profound and exemplary gesture of negativity.

Kierkegaard did not simply write a great deal—materials now collected and categorized as published and posthumous, signed and pseudonymous, as books, journals, letters, and papers; he also conducted many of his most significant interactions with other people—including courtship, polemical arguments, and correspondence with publishers—by means of writing; and he also paid special attention to the reception of his writings.⁴ As early as 1842, not long after completing his first major piece of writing, his dissertation on *The Concept of Irony* (1841), he labeled a collection of his personal letters to a friend, requesting that they be burned and adding a note “For the information of posterity” about their worthlessness (Garff 2005, 200). The hyper-awareness of future readers glimpsed in this small gesture of self-effacement, enacted

3 See Wolfsdorf 2004 for a discussion of Socratic avowals (and disavowals) of knowledge, and Press 2000 for a collection of essays concerned with Platonic anonymity. On distance as a defining aspect of narrative discourse, see Genette 1980 (esp. 162–85) and Stanzel, who writes, “Mediacy [*Mittelbarkeit*] is the generic characteristic which distinguishes narration from other forms of literary art” (1984, 4). See also Schur 2014, 50.

4 Garff brings the terms graphomania and hypergraphia to bear on speculation about Kierkegaard's possible epilepsy: “some patients with temporal lobe epilepsy are virtually possessed by an urge to write” (2005, 458). Kierkegaard himself sometimes seems awed by an unstoppable, nearly external force: “My literary activity, that enormous productivity, so intense that it seems to me that it must move stones, single portions of which not one of my contemporaries is able to compete with, to say nothing of its totality ...” (PV 168).

precisely by writing for posterity, blossomed into Kierkegaard's conception of authorship (*forfatterskab*, *forfattervirksomhed*), which is a major focus in such writings as *On My Work as an Author* (1851) and the posthumously published book *The Point of View for My Work as an Author*; not to mention numerous prefaces, notes to the reader, and self-consciously crafted, self-conscious asides from imaginary authors and narrators. In the year of his death, Kierkegaard wrote that his lifelong reckoning with Christianity was "a Socratic task." At the same time, it is evident that Kierkegaard's task was carried out, first and foremost, by way of writing.⁵ As Kierkegaard puts it in a note "Concerning the Writings on My Work as an Author"—itself a heading that indicates that the writer is here writing about his writings about his writings—"Fundamentally, to be a writer has been my only possibility" (PV 212). When understood, if mostly retrospectively, as a mission or task, Kierkegaard's sense of his authorship recalls Socrates' divinely sanctioned "mission" described in Plato's *Apology* (23b).

While the terms *forfatterskab* (authorship) and *forfattervirksomhed* (work or activity as an author) would ordinarily mean something much like oeuvre, Kierkegaard uses them in a more specialized way that has been widely adopted by scholars. Kierkegaard's self-conscious usage often puts some emphasis on the impersonal quality of his own authorship; hence scholars regularly understand Kierkegaard to be describing something known as *the* authorship. Kierkegaard's distance from his own oeuvre is accompanied by a sense that his writings are not so much a body of separate texts (the work as an object) as an ongoing enterprise (the work as an activity). Indeed, Kierkegaard tends to treat his oeuvre as a whole, as an enterprise that has a religious orientation. To that end, he excludes certain writings (including the dissertation on irony) from his authorship and comes to envision a totality of direct (signed) and indirect (pseudonymous) works that could be read and experienced as a coherent, if entirely provocative and asystematic, encounter with Christianity. At one point, Kierkegaard also suggests that "to be an author is and ought to be a work [*Gjerning*] and therefore a personal existing" (PV 57), a formulation raising the possibility that the author's work or activity, writing, could be a form of living.⁶ Given Kierkegaard's general and insistent penchant for contradiction, such statements do not allow us to distill a fixed doctrine on writing, but they do

5 Quotation from "My Task" (M 352). On the Socratic dimension of Kierkegaard's Christianity, see Muench 2006, who focuses on the essay "My Task." See also Howland 2006.

6 Cf. PV xxii–xxiii: "this little book is not a literary work, but an act." Kierkegaard's Danish is quoted throughout from *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, ed. Cappelørn et al. 1997–.

help us to identify the range of Kierkegaard's thinking. The substitution of life for work is a Socratic undertaking.

2 The Refraction of Authority

Throughout his life as a writer, Kierkegaard understood Socrates in perspectivist terms, as though the refraction of Socrates' legacy expressed a corresponding renunciation of authority. In his 1841 dissertation, *The Concept of Irony, with Continual Reference to Socrates*, Kierkegaard spends the first half of this lengthy, quirky, yet academic study trying to gain an accurate "view" of Socrates' "position" (*Standpunkt*) as it may be triangulated from the distorted "views" left by Xenophon, Plato, and Aristophanes in their writings (CI 9). Kierkegaard suggests that it is virtually impossible to "fix the picture of him" (*fastholde Billedet af ham*) and even Socrates' contemporaries misconstrued him, and for us he is nearly invisible (CI 12). Of course, "we are now separated from him by centuries," yet "even his own age could not apprehend him in his immediacy"; thus Kierkegaard stresses the build-up of perspectival complications: "we must strive to comprehend an already complicated view by means of a new combined reckoning" (CI 12). First, Kierkegaard takes the difficulty of reaching back to Socrates very seriously. Second, Kierkegaard stresses that the reception of Socrates centers on a figure who was nearly absent and consistently negative to begin with. It is characteristic of Kierkegaard's approach to Socrates that the Greek thinker is only to be glimpsed through telescopic lenses: Socrates as source is an elusive and silent figure from the start, then reconstructed from writings in which he was never accurately portrayed.

Having taken stock of the distance bequeathed by Socrates, Kierkegaard would turn the telescope back on himself for the rest of his life. That is, Kierkegaard not only observes but also creates a distance between himself and his legacy, thus actively participating in a Socratic tradition of self-effacement. Kierkegaard's self-regarding obsession with perspective and position, with how readers would look at his own writings, echoes in countless remarks made throughout his publications, even serving as the title of his later work *The Point of View for My Work as an Author* (*Synspunktet for min Forfatter-Virksomhed*). "From the very beginning," writes Kierkegaard elsewhere, "I have enjoined and repeated unchanged that I was 'without authority.' I regard myself rather as a *reader* of the books, not as the *author*" (PV 12).⁷ In a very real sense, Kierkegaard

7 At jeg var »uden Myndighed«, har jeg fra første Øieblik indskærpet og stereotyp gjentaget; jeg betragter mig selv helst som en Læser af Bøgerne, ikke som Forfatter (SKS 13, 19).

is presenting himself as a Socratic figure who, reluctant to claim or declaim any special knowledge, is always keeping his distance. Although the Danish words used for author (*Forfatter*) and authority (*Myndighed*) are not related as they are in English, Kierkegaard here establishes a clear correspondence between not being an author and not being an authority. He also playfully suggests that a writer may act as a reader rather than an author. Insofar as the writer has not mastered the cruxes of Christianity, he remains no less a student of the topic than any other reader.⁸ And for Kierkegaard, this also means being a reader of himself.

3 Reading through Multiple Lenses

Stages on Life's Way is a book in which Kierkegaard reads himself and Socrates at the same time, effectively offering multiple self-critical lenses through which to consider these two thinkers as writers. *Stages on Life's Way* as a whole flirts with its own literal triviality, comprising three of the most involuted sections in all of the canon of Kierkegaard's indirect communication—each of the sections burrows into itself and into the very nature of the literary-philosophical endeavor, with imaginary figures inventing further imaginary figures and old pseudonyms from previous works reappearing as characters. The book also shies away from making grand pronouncements, while sticking stubbornly to pointing out problems, felicities, and unexpected consequences in the way ideas are expressed. *Stages on Life's Way*, perhaps even more than most of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous output, is an exploration of the limits of language, narrative, and narrative authority. In fact the entire contrarian project of Kierkegaard's *Stages on Life's Way* seems to highlight the gaps and excesses that characterize Kierkegaard's three different spheres of life: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious.

Subtitled “Studies by Various Persons Compiled, Forwarded to the Press, and Published by Hilarious Bookbinder”—*Stages* contains three major studies, composed by three different imaginary writers, which are introduced by yet another (Hilarious Bookbinder). The subtitle creates the telescopic effect just mentioned, by which we are encouraged to view a source through various lenses that mark its distance from us. These studies have been “compiled,” not even written, by expressly unnamed figures, then “forwarded,” as though handled

⁸ For another version of Kierkegaard's task as one of reading, see the preface to *Two Discourses at the Communion on Fridays*, in which he quotes from one of his own pseudonymous works to make the case for himself as a reader (WA 165).

at a distance, and then published by a patently invented and ludic character, whose name “Bookbinder” underscores the impersonal bringing together of disparate parts into a collection that lacks a unitary source. The book is a tour de force, a commingling of narrators, characters, and authorial voices in its commentary on the Socratic/Platonic corpus, most notably in its first major section, “In Vino Veritas,” which points outward toward other writings (Plato’s *Symposium* and earlier Kierkegaard), while also bringing many of Kierkegaard’s far-flung imaginary voices together at a party. In this process, these narrators lose authorial autonomy and are treated as characters. To demonstrate the way that Kierkegaard’s text creates a complex web of interrelationships in its overt concern with the question of the presentation of Socrates, we will now briefly consider a remark from a character, Judge William, who seizes authority and becomes the pseudonymous narrator of the second part of *Stages on Life’s Way*. Then we will turn to “In Vino Veritas,” which is modeled on Plato’s *Symposium*.

As an invented author whose writings reach us by exaggeratedly circuitous means, Judge William, the narrator of “Some Reflections on Marriage in Answer to Objections by a Married Man” (*Adskilligt om Ægteskab mod Indsigelser af en Ægtemand*), exemplifies Kierkegaard’s telescopic focus on the Socratic in his own writings. Judge William first appears in *Stages* as a character whose manuscript has been stolen by another character/narrator and published, apparently without his knowledge. It is presumably this document that makes up the “Reflections on Marriage.” Meanwhile, just as saying that Plato’s *Symposium* is about love might be thematically accurate but would fail to observe the effects of Plato’s peculiar structure, these reflections on marriage seem as interested in the topic of authorial form as in the topic of love. In fact, Kierkegaard’s text ingeniously pulls apart theme and form in naming Judge William as the author of the section. It is worth noting that Kierkegaard plays on the appellation “Married Man” (*Ægtemand*) as the qualifier for Judge William’s authority and not, after all, his role as a judge (*Assessor*). The *ægte* in the Danish *Ægtemand* means “to marry” but its homographically identical adjective means “real.” William is qualified to talk about marriage as a married man, but as fictional character-narrator (that is, not a “real” person), his authority is in doubt.

This dubious authority takes on added resonance as Judge William remarks on “a few wise men of antiquity,” ostensibly to bolster a claim:

It is told (*Man fortæller*) that Socrates is supposed to have answered someone who asked him about marriage: Marry or do not marry—you will regret both. Socrates was an ironist who presumably concealed his wisdom and truth ironically lest it become local gossip (*Bysnak*), but he

was not a mocker.... If a mocker wants to use the Socratic saying (*Ord*), then he acts as if it were a discourse (*Tale*) and makes it something other than what it is: namely, a deeply ironic, infinitely wise answer to a foolish question. By changing the answer to a question into a discourse (*Tale*), one can produce a certain crazy comic effect, but one loses the Socratic wisdom and does violence to the trustworthy testimony that expressly introduces the story thus: Someone asked him (Socrates) whether one should marry or not. To which he answered: Whether *you* do one or the other, you will regret it.

SLW 156–7

Judge William's convoluted detour signals the importance of the unwritten, anecdotal form in which "Socratic wisdom" is transmitted. It serves to remind us that *all* Socratic wisdom is anecdotal, unpublished, and thus effectively unauthorized. Judge William's explicit concern here is that Socratic speech—his word (*Ord*)—is based on an irony directed at the specific stupidity of the young man who expects a third party to think for him. But Judge William is also drawing a distinction between reported speech, which may glimpse Socratic wisdom at a distance, and a more direct but less authentic kind of advice, which would turn Socrates' word into "something other than what it is." William calls this "something other" a *Tale* ("discourse" in the Hong's translation). According to William, the essential attribute of the Socratic dialogue, the *form of reported* question and answer, is what defines the Socratic and, to take it a step further, creates the space for Socratic wisdom.

Hence to lose such impersonal, distancing tags as "it is told," "is supposed to have answered," or "someone asked" would be to do "violence," as Judge William puts it, to the Socratic dimension of the anecdote. Socratic conversation is bound up in something like hearsay. Even the anecdote in question here is presumably drawn from Diogenes Laertius, himself a gossipy compiler of unnamed sources, an ancient Hilarius Bookbinder.⁹ Yet despite this structure of hearsay, Judge William describes how a certain ironic distance can keep Socratic wisdom from becoming "local gossip."¹⁰ The difference seems to hinge on maintaining a proper distance from Socrates. By bringing the form of a Socratic anecdote into the foreground, Judge William functions as an advocate for mediation, insisting that a Socratic answer is always implicated in a context

9 DL 2.33. It may be helpful to keep in mind that the notion of an *anecdote*, from Greek, conveys a sense of being *unpublished*. Because he is the philosopher who did not publish, Socrates' legacy is purely anecdotal.

10 See Fenves 1993 for a consideration of "chatter" throughout the Kierkegaardian corpus.

of conversational questioning, making Socrates all the more authentic for being less authoritative.

4 A Symposium with a Missing Socrates

The first major section of *Stages on Life's Way*, "In Vino Veritas," is modeled on Plato's *Symposium* and brings many of Kierkegaard's imaginary narrators from other books together at a party. Here Kierkegaard's vocal signal, the identifiable stamp of his authority, is scrambled to an extreme. Precisely where we might expect a Socrates to speak for the author, Kierkegaard hosts a party from which any obvious figure of Socrates is absent. And as though to underline the significance of this absence, the narrator describing this party (who is named William Afham) will eventually erase himself from the fictional world for which we would normally hold him responsible. While readers usually feel that Socrates is the central voice in Plato's *Symposium*, Kierkegaard's version goes beyond Plato to a place where there is no central voice at all.

This place is akin to the specific location in Denmark where "In Vino Veritas" is set. In some preliminary thoughts from 1843 on what would become this enigmatic section of *Stages* (1845), Kierkegaard makes a note in his papers: "There is a place in Gribs-Skov which is called the Nook of Eight Paths. The name is very appealing to me" (SKS 18, 169). In the book, the name of this forest place is the subject of punning elaboration:

Only the one who seeks worthily finds it, for no map indicates it. Indeed, the name itself seems to contain a contradiction, for how can the meeting of eight paths create a nook, how can the beaten and frequented be reconciled with the out-of-the-way and the hidden? And, indeed, what the solitary shuns is simply named after a meeting of three paths: triviality—how trivial, then, must be a meeting of eight paths!

SLW 16

The excess of stages, paths, and ways in *Stages on Life's Way* puts an emphasis on being both out of the way and *underway*. In this case, the nook is a hiding place, a nearly invisible place from which the story of a banquet can emerge. The nook serves as a place where ideas can be entertained without being fixed or mapped. We will not find Kierkegaard, Plato, or Socrates in the nook. The built-up story borrows from Kierkegaard and Plato even as it buries them beneath other voices. And Socrates is presumably at the silent center where all these paths and speakers meet.

Kierkegaard's text is superficially quite faithful to its Platonic source in terms of structure and thematic material. Both texts are nominally dialogues presented within a narrative frame. And both authors of these *symposia* retreat into a cacophony of narrating voices. Kierkegaard's text, like Plato's, is largely taken up by five main male speakers giving speeches concerning love at a banquet. But Kierkegaard's is not simply a recasting or updating of Plato's text. By focusing on the peculiar build-up of narrators and speakers found in both texts, and in the dialogue between them, we may observe how Kierkegaard reconsiders Plato's *Symposium* as an attempt to balance ongoing Socratic investigation—beset by stages, digressions, halts, and hurdles—with the seeming conclusiveness of a written point of view.

Plato's text sets up a doubled frame—the outer frame narrator, Apollodorus, is accosted repeatedly by interlocutors and must correct their assumption that he had been at a certain symposium with his hero, Socrates. Instead, he offers an *anecdotal* account of the symposium that he has had from a participant, Aristodemus. By the time it is Socrates' turn to speak, the dialogue is a vertiginous *mise en abyme* of hearsay: Apollodorus speaking to an unnamed companion, recalling an earlier conversation with Glaucon, telling the story that he heard from Aristodemus, who recounts Socrates' retelling of Diotima's conversation with Socrates. Kierkegaard is faithful to his source, the Platonic dialogue, by playing on the very obscurity of sources that Plato builds into his *Symposium*. If anything, it may at first appear that Kierkegaard honors his source by excessively mimicking the interpolated chain of speakers. To wit, we may recall the subtitle for *Stages on Life's Way*, "Studies by Various Persons, Compiled, Forwarded to the Press, and Published by Hilarius Bookbinder." "In Vino Veritas," as one of the "Studies by Various Persons," comes to us through a convoluted series of actions—compilation, forwarding, and publication—by a fictional editor, who is only accidentally an editor, having found the "small package of handwritten papers" among the books of a newly deceased man who had left Hilarius Bookbinder a quantity of books to be bound (3). The papers are posthumous and the writers unknown to the fictional bookbinder-cum-editor.

In fact, the original plan for "In Vino Veritas" was much more closely modeled on Plato; the text's main dialogue was to be framed by another dialogue between a character Albertus and his friend. But Kierkegaard scraps this plan, noting that "The dialogue form that I had at first wanted to give the Preliminary to the story cannot be used; it hinders the development, and finally that friend becomes a superfluous character" (528). By subsuming the form of "In Vino Veritas" under the singular voice of one narrator (William Afham), Kierkegaard creates the illusion of intimate, direct contact with the speakers, speeches, and presumed wisdom of his banquet. This occurs

in such a way that we almost forget the long chain of hearsay that forms the entirety of *Stages on Life's Way*. The familial relationship Kierkegaard seeks to form between Plato's Socrates and his own Socratic writings is established by means of simultaneous, seemingly contradictory operations carried out on the Socratic form, multiplications and subtractions aimed at divining the essentially Socratic in Kierkegaard's own writings.

5 Recollections of a Non-participant

Kierkegaard's characteristically and patently contradictory appraisal of the Socratic perhaps reaches its apotheosis in William Afham's introduction to Kierkegaard's dinner party: "I know very well that I shall not soon forget that banquet in which I participated without being a participant; but just the same I cannot now decide to release it without having provided myself with a scrupulous written *apomnêmonema* [memoir] of what for me was actually *memorable* [worthy of memory]" (15, with the Hongs's glosses). Kierkegaard modulates two elements of Plato's dialogue that distance the reader from the source of knowledge: "In Vino Veritas" is self-consciously a formally written (not anecdotal) account created by someone who was there (rather than being narrated by an Apollodorus figure who was absent from the party). But Kierkegaard's narrator starts raising questions about his own presence at the party by noting that he "participated without being a participant." This is part of Kierkegaard's effort to reconcile writing with an abdication of authority. Kierkegaard will further pull the rug out from under his readers by having this narrator himself become a "superfluous character," who later concedes, unlike the *ægtemand* Judge William, that he is not real.

The excessive repudiation of authority by the dialogue's narrator—not content with an Apollodorus figure who merely was not in attendance at the banquet, Kierkegaard creates a character who is not even "real"—takes on added importance because the Socratic is framed (most notably by Judge William in the passage quoted above) as less about the purported wisdom of the character itself and more about the diffuse context in which, or indirect method by which, wisdom is unveiled. The dialogue form, coupled with the ahistorical "someone said" that introduces the question and answer form, is vital to the Socratic. But one of the peculiarities in this Kierkegaardian reenactment of the Socratic symposium (and here it may not matter whether we refer to Plato's or Xenophon's Socratic dinner-party dialogue), is the lack of a Socrates character in the dialogue concerning love proper. By making so many

of the speakers Kierkegaardian inventions, there is no equivalent to Socrates. Given the pseudonyms' special relationship to Kierkegaard, that is, as nearly self-sufficient authorial voices outside of "In Vino Veritas," no one character has an obviously central role as the wise person at the dinner party. The effect, in short, is to show the absence of Socrates to be fundamentally Socratic.

And in place of the historical figures of Plato's text, who root the *Symposium* (however uneasily) in a referential world of historical-fictional reality, "In Vino Veritas" takes as its main speakers pseudonyms from other Kierkegaard texts, including Johannes the Seducer and Victor Eremita from *Either/Or*, and Constantin Constantius from *Repetition*. Pseudonyms already lie in that borderland between character and author, and away from the temporal, factual specificity of Plato's narrators, but Kierkegaard goes further in "In Vino Veritas." He creates the pseudonymous author/narrator William Afham. The name Afham, meaning "by him," is particularly important. First, the name is excessive, potentially referring back to Kierkegaard and to Plato as authors of written *symposia* as well as forward to Judge William, the narrator of the next part of the book. Second, the stamp of authorship in *af William Afham*, a mirror-like phrase in which a name collapses into itself by serving as the primary antecedent for the pronoun it contains, is ultimately a revocation of any specific authority.¹¹ These two gestures, of excess (an overabundance of voices) and of anonymity (a reliance on none), lead the reader into a cascading vortex of transmission where access to a reliable and authentic source is lost.

"In Vino Veritas" begins to disorient readers with prefatory signals that point in different directions. Its subtitle reads: "A Recollection Related by William Afham" (*En Erindring efterfortalt af William Afham* [7]). The prefixes in "related" (*efter-for-talt*, told after, recalling *fortale*, which means preface, as in pre-discourse) play against the archaic word then used for "preface" (*for-erindring*, literally pre-recollection) at the start of "In Vino Veritas," splintering the temporality of recollection through the lenses of narrative (9). Thus Kierkegaard begins a text that will offer, among other things, a critique of Platonic recollection—not just by engaging with the subject matter of recollection but also by folding it into the formal structures of narrative retelling. This emphasizes the strange double vision of recollection that is seen in the past tense of conventional narrative, which gives us the past in the present (this *is* what happened) as though it were foretold (now I *will* tell you

11 Westfall stresses Kierkegaard's radical renunciation of an authorial stance. "Authorship, as practiced by Kierkegaard, is always already revocation" (2007, 223).

what happened). It also creates a chronology that is even more complicated than that seen in Plato's *Symposium* as it takes place in relation to Apollodorus' history.

As indicated here, recollection in *Stages* is presented as parallel to, and perhaps inseparable from, the formation of narrative as a reformulation of experience. A recollection, by nature, is a time-shifting proposition—a making present something past and a subjective *reading* of a past happening. Afham's preface (the so-called pre-recollection) to "In Vino Veritas," which follows a note to the reader from Hilarius Bookbinder, is devoted to the topic of recollection as it pertains to Afham's recounting the story of a banquet. In the opening lines of his pre-recollection, the narrator undermines the very possibility of recollection by comparing his activity to the transmission of a secret:

What a splendid occupation to prepare a secret for oneself, how seductive to enjoy it, and yet at times how precarious to have enjoyed it, how easy for it to miscarry for one. In other words if someone believes that a secret is transferable as a matter of course, that it can belong to the bearer, he is mistaken ...

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Like a secret, Afham suggests, a recollection is not simply a possession that can be easily passed along. So the story he plans to tell has never been under his authority. As Afham proceeds to muse on the nature of this problem, he stresses the difference between memory and recollection. For "the power of recollection," Afham tells us, "is the power to distance, to place at a distance" (10). This distancing by way of recalling and reconsidering the past is akin to reading as well as writing an account of it. What is the secret that Afham prepares for himself? We might well call it a reading of Kierkegaard's authorship, reconsidered from a distance, by way of Plato's *Symposium*. Afham also ponders the "bottling of the recollection" like a fine wine, which points out the narrator's role in the fabrication of this symposium, this drinking party whose *veritas* he is preparing for us. Such musings may also recall the moment in Plato's *Symposium* when Socrates finally arrives at Agathon's party. Socrates laughs off Agathon's wish to gain some Socratic wisdom by sitting near him. Socrates claims to have scarcely any real wisdom. And in any case, wisdom could not be transferred like water being siphoned from a fuller cup into an emptier one (175d–e). One of the ironies of Kierkegaard's title "In Vino Veritas" is the idea that he could have somehow taken Socrates' pagan water and turned it into wine.

6 The Narrator Takes Himself out of the Equation

As if that were not enough to shake our grasp on the story's pedigree, Kierkegaard takes an even more radical step with his nearly anonymous narrator. Afham, his name notwithstanding, seems in his preface to have about as much of a created personality as Apollodorus and as much fictionally acceptable personhood as any other Kierkegaardian writer, occasionally making a point of speaking in the first person. That is, he has enough narratorial presence generally to maintain the narrative system. But toward the end of "In Vino Veritas" he annuls himself:

But who, then, am I? Let no one ask about that. If it did not occur to anyone to ask before, then I am saved, for now I am over the worst of it ... I am the pure being and thus almost less than nothing. I am the pure being that is everywhere present but yet not noticeable, for I am continually being annulled.

I am like the line with the arithmetic problem above and the answer below—who cares about the line?

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Afham—again, remember that the name is the ambiguous "by him"—breathes a sigh of relief that up to this point in the text no one has questioned him and, by extension, the narrative authority that holds the text together. Then he diffuses himself—and, by extension, the text's authority—into what he terms the nothingness of pure being. He caps this off with a striking image: "I am like the line with the arithmetic problem above and the answer below—who cares about the line?" While recollection has been a shaky notion from the start of the book, this gesture goes even further by apparently obliterating the individual who is doing the recollecting.

Let us examine the image of the line a bit further. Afham says that he is like the line in a math problem presented vertically: the line acts as an equal sign in an equation, which shows that the things above the line—in relation to each other ($x + y$)—are equivalent to the result below the line. Annulling the line—which is also drawing attention to the line to which we were not paying attention before—accomplishes something peculiar: without the line, we cease to see or think of the *progress* of the *operation*: $x + y$ *making* z . Instead, we see the strange superimposition of equivalence. The terms $x + y$ and z may be mathematically equivalent, but their essential difference is highlighted by the vanishing line: $x + y$ may *make* z , but they *are* not z . Returning to the gist

of Afham's self-annulment, how does this highlighted illusion of equivalence fit into the apparent obliteration of the individual narrative voice? If we allow that the arithmetic image mitigates the notion of annulment, then the line persists. It is "almost less than nothing," and so the narrator withdraws from the reader, but the line remains as a faintly disquieting reminder of all that can, as Afham says in the text's first sentence, "miscarry" between a problem and its answer. For Afham, the hiddenness of the secret and even of the self is essential for recollection, much as silence and absence are needed to maintain the Socratic balance of Kierkegaard's authorship.

7 Kierkegaard's Socratic Legacy

This chapter suggests that Kierkegaard's repudiation of authority, his reluctance to communicate a systematic body of thought in straightforward prose, can be helpfully understood as a Socratic attitude. Kierkegaard gives us a deliberately crafted authorship that telescopes its author's identity through a kaleidoscope of contradiction, fictional narrative, and unreliable testimony. In this way, as a writer, he pursues a Socratic withdrawal from authority and follows an ongoing path of questioning. Socrates is famous for pausing on the way to the symposium portrayed by Plato, lost in that moment of contemplation that Kierkegaard describes as a quintessential act of silence (CI 11). But in the *Symposium*, that private moment takes place precisely on the way to the public forum of conversation. It is almost as if Socrates' contemplative standstill hides him from the narrative that goes ahead with Aristodemus to the hubbub at Agathon's house. On the understanding that Socratic silence stands apart from writing as it does from dialogue, the noisiness of Kierkegaard's texts has a parallel in the public existence of Socratic dialogue and the general legacy of publication that has given form to the Socrates we know today.

Søren Kierkegaard now belongs to a branch of European writing, often known under the rubric of Continental philosophy, that puts particular stress on the value of deliberately indirect communication. This impulse is observable in writers such as Parmenides and Plato as well as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, who are not simply difficult to read at times (like Kant or Hegel are, for example), but who consciously eschew or skew the conventional trappings of expository prose. Thus Nietzsche writes approvingly of a hidden type of man "who instinctively needs speech for silence" (*ein solcher Verborgener, der aus Instinkt das Reden zum Schweigen ... braucht*), who is drawn to an "evasion of

communication" (*Ausflucht vor Mittheilung*).¹² A comparable impulse is seen in the ambivalence of modern literary authors such as Franz Kafka, Robert Walser, and Fernando Pessoa toward the nature of authorship and publication.

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12 *Beyond Good and Evil*, sec. 40. Nietzsche 1968, 241. On the roles played by Nietzsche and Kierkegaard in the making of the modern Socrates, see Kofman 1998.

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Nietzsche's Revaluation of Socrates

Christopher C. Raymond

1 Introduction

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) holds a unique place in the history of Socratic reception. Few writers give Socrates a greater role in the shaping of Western culture, and none is so fervently critical of his influence. In Nietzsche's first book, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), Socrates is both the “turning point and vortex of so-called world history” and the “most questionable phenomenon of antiquity.”¹ In a notebook entry from the last year of his productive life, he is “a moment of the *deepest perversity* in human history.”² But for Nietzsche that moment has not yet passed: modern culture is a thoroughly Socratic culture, and therefore a deeply perverse one. At every point, his chief purpose in writing about Socrates is to call into question our highest values—to force us to ask whether the examined life is the only livable one for human beings after all, or whether it could be our undoing.

From the first, responses to Nietzsche's treatment of Socrates have tended toward the psycho-biographical—as though what needs addressing is not the content of the critique itself but the idiosyncratic mind that produced it. Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, in his otherwise substantive (albeit scathing, and perhaps short-sighted) pamphlet responding to *BT*, reduces the critique to a personal vendetta, stating that its author “fiercely *hates* Socrates for his non-mysticism” (my emphasis), declining to comment further: “to correct without any prospect of being understood is a futile task.”³ At the

1 *The Birth of Tragedy* (*BT*) §15 and §13 (*KSA* 1, 100 and 90).

2 *Nachgelassene Fragmente* (*NF*) spring 1888, 14[111] (*KSA* 13, 289).

3 Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 2000, 21, tr. Postl; German original repr. in Gründer 1969 (along with the replies of Rohde and Wagner, and Wilamowitz's follow-up). Cf. 18: “Mr. N's actual reason for associating [Socrates and Euripides] is the burning hatred he feels toward both of them. The means for venting this hatred do not embarrass him; he is happy with any means.” Wilamowitz calls correcting Nietzsche an *Oknosarbeit*, referring to the mythical figure Ocnus. On the Nietzsche–Wilamowitz controversy, see also Calder 1983; Mansfeld 1986; Zelle 1994; Porter 2011 (detailing Wilamowitz's misquotations of *BT*); and for a concise summary, Wilson 2016, 492–3. Toward the end of his life, Wilamowitz would write about the episode: “For all my pamphlet's boyishness, with the final outcome I hit the mark. Nietzsche did what I called on him to do: he gave up lecturing and scholarship (*Wissenschaft*), and became the prophet

century's turn, in an essay titled "The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche as a Psychopathological Problem" (1900), Rudolf Steiner claims that his subject's "hatred for Socrates" stems from a more basic "repulsion against truth."⁴ Four decades later, Crane Brinton similarly writes of Nietzsche's "hatred for the tradition of European rationalism"—with Socrates serving as the main "villain" in his story.⁵

In 1948, Walter Kaufmann published the provocatively-titled "Nietzsche's Admiration for Socrates," to correct what he considered a one-sided and superficial view of the matter.⁶ Responding to Brinton's "villain" remark, Kaufmann goes so far as to claim that Nietzsche "appears to have modeled his entire philosophic enterprise in the image of Socrates" (472), and that "Socrates became little less than an idol for him" (474). The article was the initial overture in Kaufmann's broader effort to make Nietzsche's thought more palatable to Anglophone audiences in the wake of the Second World War.⁷ (If Nietzsche admired *Socrates*, how bad could he really be?) But Kaufmann's argument itself depends on a tendentious reading of *BT* and a selective consideration of the evidence from the later works.⁸ His influence is nonetheless apparent in much later twentieth-century scholarship, which tends to speak not of Nietzsche's "hatred" but of his "ambivalence" toward Socrates.⁹ What unites these more

of an irreligious religion and an unphilosophical philosophy. His daemon justified him in that: he had the genius and strength for it. Whether his self-worship and his blasphemies against the teachings of Socrates and Christ will bring him victory, let the future show" (Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1928, 130, tr. Richards 1930, modif.).

4 Steiner 1960.

5 Brinton 1941, 83. The chapter is titled "What Nietzsche Hated." See also Ziegler 1913, 278; Bertram 1918, 309 (on Nietzsche's "love-hate" for Socrates—a product of his own "self-hatred and self-transfiguration"); cf. Lacoue-Labarthe 1990.

6 Kaufmann 1948. An earlier version of the essay won a Bowdoin Prize at Harvard, where Kaufmann was a doctoral student.

7 A revised version of the article supplied the final chapter of his highly influential *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (1st ed. 1950). For the fourth edition (1974), Kaufmann revised the chapter's title to "Nietzsche's *Attitude* Toward Socrates" (my emphasis), to prevent readers from thinking it ignores the passages in Nietzsche's corpus "that are sharply critical of Socrates" (iv).

8 For a thorough critique of Kaufmann's reading, see Jovanovski 1991; cf. Dannhauser 1974, 26–41.

9 See, e.g., Dodds 1959, 388; Lloyd-Jones 1982, 180 ("love-hate relationship"); Arrowsmith 1990, 161; Tanner 1994, 14 ("tortured ambivalence"); Hulse 1995, 179. The following passage from Nehamas 1985 typifies the psycho-biographical approach: "What is ambivalent in Nietzsche's attitude toward Socrates is not his rage or his enmity: these are always there. What is necessarily ambivalent is his reaction to the gnawing question whether in looking at Socrates he may not after all be looking at a mirror" (30). See also Nehamas 1998, ch. 5, quoting an oft-cited fragment from Nietzsche's notebooks (132): "*Socrates*, to confess it simply, stands so

nuanced readings to earlier treatments is the focus on Nietzsche's "attitude" and the motives behind his censure and (sporadic) praise.¹⁰

More recently, however, James Porter has argued that the standard focus obscures an important truth: "'Socrates' is not a fixed entity in Nietzsche's eyes but is a constantly moving and changing target."¹¹ What Nietzsche has to say about Socrates, in any of his writings, depends always on his "momentary polemical and rhetorical requirements." So, according to Porter, "any attempt to pin down Nietzsche's presumed view of Socrates and to attach it to a singular fixed meaning, or to anything other than his ever-changing use and multiply layered understanding of Socrates, is bound to come up hopelessly short." Porter provides a (non-exhaustive) list of twenty-five different ways Socrates is "constructed" in Nietzsche's corpus (411)—some invented and others traditional, some "mutually reinforcing" and others "irreconcilably at odds" (412). "By comprehending the entirety of the Socratic tradition and activating so many of its registers at any given time," writes Porter, "Nietzsche's representations of Socrates achieve a maximal plurality and fluidity of their own."¹² Yet there is an overall point to this Socratean flux, for through it Nietzsche reflects the fact that "Socrates" is and always has been a

close to me, that I am almost always fighting a battle with him" (*NF*) summer? 1875, 6[3] (*KSA* 8, 97, emphasis in the original). For another view, see Martin Buber's letter to Kaufmann in response to the "Admiration" article (dated 27 February 1949): "Why this ambivalence? It could be shown, for instance, that Nietzsche wished to be a Socratic man and did not succeed, because he had no immediacy in human relationships; and then, that 'Socrates' means devotion to eternal values by asking about them without accepting any formulated one[s], and Nietzsche despaired more and more of being able to deal with eternal values, till out of this despair he came to deny their very existence and to proclaim in their stead 'new' values, which, of course, were no values at all. The two motives could even, I think, be shown as being ultimately one, the only human place for the living reality of the eternal values being the immediacy of relationship" (Glatzer and Mendes-Flohr 1991, 536).

10 The most thorough and dispassionate of the post-Kaufmann treatments is Dannhauser 1974. Independent from Kaufmann is Schmidt 1969, an exhaustive study absorbing earlier German scholarship.

11 Porter 2006, 407. In broad sympathy with Porter's deconstructionist approach is Silk 2007.

12 "As a result," Porter continues, "they collectively render the name *Socrates* in his own writings referentially unstable and nearly opaque—in short, a 'problem'" (412). On the next page, Porter seems to pull back a little from this position: "None of this need prevent Nietzsche from ever having imagined himself standing in close proximity to Socrates, whether as his rival or thrall ... Nor is Socrates a random assemblage of ideas, as Nietzsche construes him: there is a coherence to the attributes listed above, which is both historical and conceptual, even if these attributes are often shot through with difficulty and aporia" (413).

construction, a “variously transmitted idea” (413), and thus lays bare the absurdity of seeking his “real” identity.¹³

Porter’s approach is salutary in that it shifts the focus from Nietzsche’s personal idiosyncrasies to the *uses* to which the Socratic image is put in his writings. But Porter significantly overstates the mutability of that image. For all the rich variation in Nietzsche’s portrayal of Socrates, there emerges a largely coherent set of features that provides the target for his critique. Nietzsche shows little interest in the traditional “problem” of Socrates—the challenge of discerning the “historical” Socrates behind the long and complex stream of interpretation, assimilation, and projection that reaches back to the first generation of Socratics.¹⁴ His concern is not with the things the son of Sophroniscus truly said or thought, but with what the figure of Socrates stands for in the Western imagination. In both his early and later works, Nietzsche’s Socrates is above all an *archetype*, the personification of a more general psychological tendency: “Socratism.” The concept of Socratism, as we will see, is constructed mainly from traditional materials, and reflects a prevailing view of the significance of Socrates in Nietzsche’s own time. This in turn explains Socrates’ main rhetorical function in his texts, which is to give a focus to Nietzsche’s critical engagement not just with the philosophical tradition, but with the core ideals of Enlightenment in both its ancient and modern forms.¹⁵

Nietzsche’s critique of Socrates thus plays a central part in his overarching project of a “revaluation of all values” (*Umwerthung alle Werthe*).¹⁶ This chapter aims to illuminate that role. Our focus will be the two periods of Nietzsche’s most sustained reflection on Socratism—from the start of his professorship at Basel to the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy* (1869–72), and in the years just prior to his mental collapse (1886–8). While there are substantial changes in Nietzsche’s rhetorical style and philosophical vision, his treatment of Socrates

13 Cf. 413: “Socrates, in Nietzsche’s writings, represents the tradition that claims to represent Socrates.”

14 See Nails 1995, 8–31. The “Socratic problem” had been a focus of German scholarship since Schleiermacher’s critique of the Xenophontic sources a few decades before Nietzsche’s birth (1818). Cf. Dorion 2011 and Ausland (in this volume). Nietzsche sometimes specifies that he is discussing *Plato’s* or *Xenophon’s* Socrates, as opposed to the historical person, but he has no systematic way of distinguishing among them. On Nietzsche’s knowledge of and engagement with Plato’s dialogues, several of which he frequently taught at the Basel Pädagogium and lectured on in his university courses, see Brobjer 2004.

15 See *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am so Wise” §7: “I never attack people,—I treat people as if they were high-intensity magnifying glasses that can illuminate a general, though insidious and barely noticeable, predicament” (KSA 6, 274, tr. Norman).

16 See Large 2010. While the phrase appears only in Nietzsche’s later works, it is an apt description of his early treatment of Socrates.

in these periods is remarkably consistent. In both cases, Nietzsche presents a Socrates who is both familiar and alien to his readers—the standard-bearer of their highest values, and yet a deeply “questionable” (*fragwürdig*) figure. Nietzsche's critical strategy involves eschewing the norms of argument and evidence that for his contemporaries constituted the study of antiquity as a “science” (*Wissenschaft*). For him, the ideal of *Altertumswissenschaft*, as practiced by his academic colleagues, is itself part of the Socratic inheritance whose value needs questioning. Nietzsche thus *performs* his critique of Socratism by abandoning philological rigor and freely exploiting the ancient sources to suit his rhetorical aims. But an effective performance needs a willing audience. The challenge he faces, therefore, is to preserve enough of the familiar Socratic image that his critique will register as a critique of *Socrates*, and not just of some Nietzschean fantasy. At the end of the chapter, I consider whether Nietzsche meets this challenge, and how much it matters to his overall goals.

If Nietzsche's Socrates is above all an archetype, a personification of Socratism, we should first get clearer about what that term signifies. Socratism (or “Socratic rationalism”) manifests itself in two ways. The first, inner-directed aspect of Socratism is the demand that one's own and others' actions be rationally justified. From the Socratic perspective my actions have value only if I can give reasons to find them good, can defend those reasons, and in fact perform them for those very reasons. This implies that I must be *conscious* of my reasons for acting, so that they will be available for dialectical scrutiny. Nietzsche regularly contrasts Socratism with artistic (and especially musical) creation, which he sees as essentially instinctive and unreflective (though not therefore arbitrary).¹⁷ The issue is not simply that aesthetic choices cannot be dialectically defended—though he surely also thinks that—but that reflecting on the reasons for artistic acts undermines the acts themselves, in hindering the spontaneity and vision needed for true creativity. The second, outer-directed aspect of Socratism is the belief in the value of striving for a complete and systematic understanding of the world—either because such understanding is itself the *summum bonum*, or because it is the only way to secure peace and comfort or some other desirable end. Nietzsche, as has already been mentioned, sees Socratism as the driving force behind modern *Wissenschaft*, with its optimistic pursuit of knowledge in every domain. Nowhere does he spell out how this second aspect of Socratism relates to the first, but he might think that the habit of justifying some beliefs (i.e., about what I ought to do) generalizes to the habit of justifying *all* beliefs (i.e., about the world at large). The Socratic demand for an account is only fully satisfied, one might suppose,

17 On the law-like nature of artistic creation, see *Beyond Good and Evil* §188; cf. Ridley 2007.

if I can explain my actions vis-à-vis the order of things and humanity's place within it. Nietzsche might instead think that the Socratic drive for knowledge, when left unchecked, always extends to the practical domain. In either case, what unites the two faces of Socratism is the supreme value placed on rational reflection and argument, both practical and theoretical.¹⁸

The possibility of a "revaluation" of any cultural phenomenon depends on a shared conception of that phenomenon within the culture (in this case, what the name "Socrates" signifies), and a prevailing view of its value. In the next two sections, I situate Nietzsche's early treatment of Socrates within his academic milieu—first by examining the scandal of his public lecture on Socrates toward the start of his career at Basel, and then by surveying the picture of Socrates in Eduard Zeller's *Philosophie der Griechen* (1st ed. 1844–52), the most authoritative study in Nietzsche's time. Sections four and five turn to Nietzsche's depictions of Socrates in *The Birth of Tragedy* and *Twilight of the Idols*, respectively, focusing on his creative license with the ancient source material in pursuit of his polemical goals.

2 A Scandalous Debut: Nietzsche's "Socrates and Tragedy" Lecture

On 1 February 1870, a twenty-five-year-old Nietzsche gave the second of two public lectures in the city museum on Basel's Augustinergasse, a short walk from the university where he had become a professor of classical philology the previous spring. The topic this time was "Socrates and Tragedy," and he delivered it before a mixed audience of colleagues and series subscribers.¹⁹ Their reaction, Nietzsche writes in a letter to his friend Erwin Rohde, was one of "terror and incomprehension."²⁰ According to another letter, this time to Paul Deussen, the lecture was understood as a "chain of paradoxes" and "aroused

18 In his later works, e.g., *The Gay Science* §344, Nietzsche attacks essentially the same phenomenon under the label "will to truth" (*Wille zur Wahrheit*); for discussion, see Larmore 2008, ch. 9.

19 KSA 1, 533–49. Translations from the lecture are my own. The first lecture, "The Greek Music-Drama" (KSA 1, 515–32), was delivered two weeks before. The lectures took place in the great hall (*aula*) of the museum, and Nietzsche reported to his sister that he gave them to a "packed audience" (Gossman 2000, 423). On the public-lecture tradition at Basel, see Schorske 1988, 202.

20 Letter written in two parts, dated end of January and 15 February (KSB 3, 95, tr. Middleton). See also the letter to Rohde dated 28 March, in which Nietzsche says that his two public lectures "were very offensive (*anstößig*) to some" (KSB 3, 112). To his mother and sister, he says only that his lectures "have excited lively interest" (letter dated end of March [KSB 3, 108]).

hatred and fury in some quarters.”²¹ “Offense must come (*Es muss Anstoss kommen*),” Nietzsche continues, echoing Luther’s translation of Matthew 18:7. “I have, in the main, cast caution aside; to the individual human being, let us be compassionate and yielding, in the expression of our worldview as rigid as the virtue of ancient Romans.” The promising young philologist was getting a taste for intellectual scandal that would prove fateful for his academic career.

We have no other accounts of the evening, and Nietzsche may well have exaggerated his lecture’s immediate effect. But we do know the reaction of another audience that week. A copy of “Socrates and Tragedy” was soon received at Tribschen, the home of Richard Wagner and Cosima von Bülow, where Nietzsche had been a frequent visitor since his arrival in Basel. On 4 February Wagner writes to him:

Yesterday evening I read your treatise to our friend [sc. Cosima]. It took me a long time to calm her down again afterwards: she found that you had treated the tremendous names of the great Athenians in a surprisingly modern manner ... For my own part, what I felt most of all was a sense of shock at the boldness with which you impart so new an idea, in such brief and categorical terms, to a public which is presumably not really disposed to be educated, so that, if you want your sins to be absolved, you must reckon upon being totally misunderstood in this quarter.

KGB II/2, 137–8, tr. SPENCER

He goes on to pray that his young friend will not “come to grief” as a result of his “incredible views,” and encourages him to collect his thoughts for a more comprehensive study. A lengthy letter from Cosima follows soon thereafter; she begins with a quotation from Goethe—“Everything significant is disquieting”—before describing her excitement upon hearing the “most profound and far-reaching problems” so boldly and succinctly put.²² Wagner was obliged to spin out the lecture’s theme with her the entire evening, almost sentence by sentence, until her initial shock was overcome and she was convinced on every point.²³ When the following day she read through the work

21 Letter dated February (*KSB* 3, 98–9, tr. Middleton, modif.).

22 *KGB* II/2, 138–45.

23 Cosima’s account in her diary is more subdued: “In the evening R. reads me the lecture, which we find very stimulating. ‘Beloved music,’ Socrates’s dream, brings R. back to the subject of the musical theme. ‘How much more significant does such a theme appear than any spoken thought! Schopenhauer is right: music is a world in itself, the other arts only express a world’ (Gregor-Dellin and Mack, 1.186, tr. Skelton). The next evening Wagner read her Aristophanes’ *Frogs* in connection with their discussions of the lecture.

on her own, Cosima writes, it made a deeply beautiful impression. She echoes Wagner's call for him to embark on a longer project: "make your lecture into a book."²⁴

What was the "new idea" that Wagner feared would bring his young friend to ruin? The letter does not say, but it was in his second Basel lecture that Nietzsche first proposed that tragedy, the highest achievement of ancient Greek culture, was destroyed by the spirit of "Socratism." The principal actor in his account is Euripides, who was baffled by the instinctive creations of his predecessors, Aeschylus and Sophocles, and sought to reform every element of their art—myth, characters, chorus, plot, and language—according to a new "rationalist aesthetic" (*KSA* 1, 537). Most fatally, on Nietzsche's view, dialogue supplanted music as the core of the tragic experience. The protagonist drawn from primeval myth now had to be a "hero of dialectic" (547), who could appeal to the litigious Athenians' love of verbal ingenuity, while the music was confined to frivolous interludes. Whereas the older tragedy rested on a view of human existence as terrible and absurd, and thereby stirred the audience's compassion, Euripidean drama was essentially *optimistic*, expressing a faith in the power of reason to triumph over fate (546–7).

It is not until almost the midpoint of the lecture that Nietzsche reveals his central thesis. Drawing on an ancient (mostly comic) tradition, he claims that Euripides' reforms were really a *Socratic* phenomenon: "Everything must be conscious to be beautiful' is the Euripidean parallel to the Socratic dictum, 'Everything must be conscious to be good.' Euripides is the poet of Socratic rationalism" (540).²⁵ Nietzsche connects Euripides' criticisms of Aeschylean tragedy to Socrates' mission to expose the ignorance of his fellow Athenians. When Apollo's oracle declared him the wisest of men, Socrates doubted the god and set out to find someone wiser. But when he questioned the most famous men of his age, he discovered they lacked a conscious grasp of their own actions and performed them "only by instinct" (541). With these words Socrates brought his entire culture under a cloud of suspicion: for the first time the Greeks were forced to defend their creative instincts with reasons and arguments, yet their achievements were not the kind whose value could be rationally justified. Nor did they have the means to challenge Socrates' attack on the unconscious, since that would have required the very critical-dialectical

24 In a postscript, Cosima adds an auspicious remark: "I must also tell you that you presented your lecture on the evening before the lark began to sing (on Candlemas, the 2nd of February); surely that is a good sign."

25 For the ancient sources on Socrates and Euripides, see *SSR* I A 7 and 23, I C 21, I D 1, VI A 76. See also Henrichs 1986, 385–90; Wildberg 2005; Lefkowitz 2016, ch. 1; Bromberg (in this volume), 58–67.

skills their artistic genius precluded. Their so-called “wisdom” counted for nothing under the Socratic gaze, as dialectic emerged as the only activity truly worth pursuing.

On Nietzsche's picture, then, it is not Euripides but ultimately Socrates who bears responsibility for tragedy's demise: “Everyone knows the Socratic sayings, ‘Virtue (*Tugend*) is knowledge (*Wissen*),’ ‘Sin arises only from ignorance,’ ‘The virtuous man is the happy man.’ In these three basic forms of optimism lies the death of pessimistic tragedy” (547). And yet, Nietzsche claims that Socrates himself is emblematic of a larger phenomenon. “Socratism is older than Socrates” (545); indeed, its corrosive influence is apparent even in the earliest surviving plays. The original sin of tragedy, according to Nietzsche, was to introduce the *second actor*, which in turn gave birth to dialogue as a key element of the music-drama. Thus, Nietzsche concludes that the “highpoint” of Greek tragedy was achieved by “Aeschylus in his first great period,” before he came under Sophocles' influence; Sophocles marks the start of the “gradual decline,” while Euripides with his “conscious reaction” against Aeschylean tragedy “precipitates the end” (549). But it is Socrates, the hero of a radically new art form, the Platonic dialogue, who most fully embodies the rationalism of the age.

“Offense must come”—but it is not immediately clear which aspect of the lecture Nietzsche thought was bound to offend.²⁶ It was almost certainly not his assessment of Euripides: since August Wilhelm Schlegel's lectures on drama at the start of the century, the inferiority of Euripides with respect to his predecessors had been a critical commonplace.²⁷ Nietzsche's notebooks from the winter of 1869–70 show his close engagement with Schlegel's analysis of the poet. So in this matter, at least, Nietzsche knew he was on solid ground.

26 Holub 2015, 66–70, suggests, on inadequate grounds, that it was the lecture's anti-Semitism. A draft manuscript of the lecture concludes by identifying Socratism with the “Jewish press.” But we cannot know whether Nietzsche delivered this line publicly, and, as we will see, there is a better explanation for his audience's outrage. He evidently did include the line in the copy sent to Tribschen, because in her letter Cosima warns him off mentioning “the Jews” explicitly, so as not to stir up a hornets' nest. But for neither her nor Wagner does this aspect of the lecture seem to be the main cause for concern on their friend's behalf.

27 Schlegel 1809–11. On Schlegel's influence on the nineteenth century, see Behler 1986. Schlegel credited his younger brother Friedrich with discerning the “immeasurable gulf” between Euripides and his predecessors (335). For Schlegel's influence on *The Birth of Tragedy*, see Henrichs 1986: Nietzsche's “own criticism of Euripides echoes August Wilhelm's at every turn” (373). Schmidt 2012 (222–70) provides the relevant citations to Schlegel and cites Gottfried Bernhardt's *Grundriss der Griechischen Litteratur* (1845) as another important influence on *BT*.

What his audience would not have been prepared for, however, was the claim that Euripides was a *Socratic* poet—that the disintegrating force which led to the demise of tragedy, and of ancient Greek culture more generally, found its perfect expression in the figure of Socrates.²⁸ They were now called upon to view Socrates, the paragon of philosophical virtue, as the symbol of an “inverted world” (*verkehrte Welt*, 541, 542).

If that was not enough to incite his audience, Nietzsche goes on to describe Socrates as the “harbinger and herald of *science* (Wissenschaft)” (545), thus bridging his narrative from antiquity to the modern world. With his critique of Socratism, as we will see, Nietzsche calls into question the highest values of his own culture, and not least the scholarly profession to which he had recently gained admission. What must have aroused “hatred and fury” in his audience, one can safely imagine, was not only the way he had portrayed the historical Socrates, but what that portrayal implied about *them*.

In fact, it appears that at least one of Nietzsche’s own Basel colleagues was among the incensed. In a letter dated 20 February, Cosima responds to his concern about a certain “philosophy professor” who was “in a rage” against him.²⁹ Curt Janz supposes the anonymous figure to be Karl Steffensen, a former rector of the university who had published his own lecture on Socrates a decade prior.³⁰ In February 1870, Steffensen held one of two chairs in philosophy at Basel. The other was occupied by Gustav Teichmüller, the author of volumes on Aristotle’s poetics and philosophy of art.³¹ Another biographer,

28 See the reaction in Heinrich Romundt’s letter to Nietzsche dated 25 March 1870 (*KGB* 11/2, 175–8). Henrichs 1986, 386, notes that more than a century earlier, Lessing had referred to Socrates as “the teacher and friend of Euripides” (*Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, no. 49). But Lessing also claims that “what Euripides learned from Socrates ... made him first in his art” (tr. Arons and Figal). Schlegel, by contrast, denies the historicity of the Socrates-Euripides connection, but accepts that Euripides studied with Anaxagoras and other intellectuals (Henrichs 1986, 386).

29 *KGB* 11/2, 152.

30 Janz 1978, I, 403–4. Cf. Brobjer 2008, claiming (without giving evidence) that Steffensen “heard Nietzsche’s two [*sic*] lectures on Socrates and objected to them” (137 n. 3). Steffensen’s January 1861 lectures were published as *Über Sokrates. Mit Beziehung auf einige Zeitfragen*. Of the Socratic dictum “Virtue consists in knowing” (*Die Tugend stehe im Wissen*), Steffensen writes, “The ‘knowing’ meant by Socrates is neither knowledge in the usual sense, nor the ability of quick-witted reasoners, but rather the inner light of self-reflection, through which our true nature and its eternal laws gradually dawn on us and become discernible” (88, my translation). Socrates converted people from the vanity and folly of customary habits, by redirecting the tools of epistemology and logic toward ethical questions (Pestalozzi 1889, 32–3). On Steffensen’s life and career, see Hirschfeld 1976.

31 *Beiträge zur Poetik des Aristoteles* (1867) and *Aristoteles’ Philosophie der Kunst* (1869).

Curtis Cate, assumes the enraged professor to be him,³² but there is inadequate evidence to decide between the two. Whichever it was, Nietzsche evidently did little to ingratiate himself with his philosophical colleagues. At the end of the year, Teichmüller took up a position at Dorpat, and Nietzsche, increasingly disillusioned with the aims and methods of his own discipline, applied for the vacated chair on the Faculty of Philosophy.³³ The scheme, however, was a miserable failure, as Nietzsche was passed over in favor of Teichmüller's former pupil, Rudolf Eucken.³⁴ It seems doubtful that his application would have been seriously considered even without the scandal of the previous winter, given his lack of formal training in philosophy.³⁵ But the "Socrates and Tragedy" lecture alone was probably enough to disqualify him.³⁶ Criticizing Socrates was not a minor thing, as his audience's reaction shows, nor were the methods Nietzsche used to do it. A look at the classic historiography of the mid-nineteenth century will help us appreciate Nietzsche's radical approach.

3 Socrates in Zeller's *Philosophie der Griechen*

Originally published over eight years, 1844–52, Eduard Zeller's three-part *Philosophie der Griechen* became the standard history of Greek philosophy

32 Cate 2002: "Basel's thirty-eight-year-old professor of philosophy, Gustav Teichmüller, was incensed by the presumption displayed by his twenty-five-year-old colleague" (106). Cate does not provide a source, but given the absence of other evidence I assume he is inferring from Cosima's remark.

33 In a letter (probably from January 1871) to Wilhelm Vischer, the man who recruited him to Basel, Nietzsche writes that the strain of both university and Pädagogium teaching had caused repeated bouts of exhaustion and ill health. As a result he was having to set aside his "real task"—his "philosophical task"—for which he was prepared to "*sacrifice any profession*" (*KSB* 3, 175, tr. Middleton, modif.). The solution he proposes is to move into Teichmüller's vacant chair (and that Rohde should fill his own chair in classical philology), which would both lessen his duties and allow him to follow his true vocation ("my chief interest lay always in philosophical questions"). In addition to his published works on Diogenes Laertius, he notes his thorough study of Kant and Schopenhauer among his credentials. Nietzsche adds what may be a veiled acknowledgment of the scandal of the previous winter: "You will certainly have gained from the last two years good faith that I know how to avoid anything inappropriate and offensive (*das Unpassende und Anstössige*), and that I can distinguish between what is suitable for a lecture to students and what is not" (177).

34 On this episode, see Cate 2002, 119–25.

35 In another letter to Rohde dated 29 March 1871 (*KSB* 3, 189), Nietzsche says he has some indication that "the 'philosopher' Steffensen" was not favorable toward their scheme, and suggests that his admiration of Schopenhauer could be his downfall.

36 See also Janz 1978, I, 405.

in the German language. A second edition, thoroughly revised and retitled, appeared across 1856–68, followed by a third edition of 1869–81.³⁷ Nietzsche owned at least part of the second edition and made extensive use of the volume on the Presocratics for his Democritus studies of 1867–8.³⁸ Although schooled in Hegelian theory, Zeller already took a critical stance toward Hegel in the first edition of his history.³⁹ Rather than treat the achievements of the Greek philosophers as necessary stages in the progress of Reason's self-understanding, as Hegel had,⁴⁰ Zeller turned his focus to the peculiarities of individual thinkers and schools and their connections to the wider culture. His task was to explain broader conceptual developments from the ground up, through the careful analysis of texts and reflection on social conditions.⁴¹ The overall picture he provides is nevertheless decidedly progressivist: all told, the story of Greek philosophy from Thales to Plato and Aristotle is one of intellectual and moral triumph. Socrates is the pivotal figure in this account.

Zeller begins the second part of his history in portentous fashion:

Toward the close of the fifth century, the scientific (*wissenschaftliche*) life of the Greek people had reached a point at which there were only two alternatives: either to renounce science (*Wissenschaft*) altogether, or to attempt a total transformation of it upon a new basis. The older schools for the most part had not died out, but confidence in their systems had been shaken; a general disposition to doubt had set in. From the sophists, men had learned to call everything into question, to attack or defend with equal readiness every opinion; belief in the truth of human concepts and

37 The original title, *Philosophie der Griechen. Eine Untersuchung über Charakter, Gang und Hauptmomente ihrer Entwicklung*, became *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* in all subsequent editions. Zeller's work remains influential to this day; on his role in shaping the concept of "Presocratic" philosophy, see Laks 2017, 20–21.

38 See Brobjer 2008, 194. Nietzsche also used the first part of the third edition (covering the Presocratics and published in 1869) for his Basel lectures on the "Pre-Platonic Philosophers." For a comparison of Zeller and Nietzsche (and Hegel) in their approaches to philosophical historiography, see Heit 2014. Other important secondary sources for Nietzsche's *Sokratesbild* include the German translation of Grote's *History of Greece* (*Geschichte Griechenlands*, 6 vols., 1850–6) and Alberti's *Sokrates: Ein Versuch über ihn nach den Quellen* (1869).

39 See Beiser 2014, 257–9.

40 See Brown 2006; for Hegel's account of Socrates, who marks a "major turning point in the world's consciousness" (124), see 124–56; see also Bowman (in this volume).

41 See Palmer 2009, 4–6. On Zeller's method of historical criticism as applied to Biblical texts, see Beiser 2014, 261–5. For a fresh assessment of Zeller's significance, see the essays collected in Hartung 2010.

in the validity of moral laws had been lost ... Would a creative power be found, which knew how to make use of [earlier] elements and to direct thinking onto a new path? This is the question Greek philosophy faced when Socrates came on the scene.⁴²

ZELLER 1859, 1–2

Socrates appears at a crisis point in Greek history, when the rapid cultural advances after the defeat of Persia had given way to internal strife and moral decline. Zeller connects these new circumstances to the activities of the sophists, who taught the Greeks to question traditional values but offered nothing in their place. While the previous century had seen a flowering of scientific speculation, the systems of those natural philosophers were too one-sided and dogmatic to withstand the new critical spirit. An enervating skepticism had begun to take hold in both ethical and intellectual life. At the same time, Zeller claims, the conditions were ripe for a philosophical revolution. Whereas earlier inquiry had focused exclusively on the natural world, the sophists turned for the first time to practical questions, while further sharpening the “scientific organ” of the Greeks against the whetstone of *eristics* (1). Socrates’ great achievement was to harness the speculative and critical energy of his culture toward a systematic understanding of ethics.

To illuminate the conflict between tradition and innovation in the later fifth century, Zeller first turns to the tragic poets. Aeschylus emerges from the Archaic period as a Janus-faced figure: his worldview looks back to the primitive belief in jealous gods, but at times points to a more exalted, almost monotheistic conception of divine justice as the necessary balance between guilt and punishment. Sophocles also puts the highest value on reverence toward the gods, but in his plays justice is united with mercy; his view of humanity’s relation to the divine is altogether sunnier, mirroring the greater harmony of the Periclean age. Sophocles’ advance over Aeschylus is also aesthetic: in their delineation of character, handling of plot, poetic beauty, and structure, his works show a “higher artistic perfection” (8). With Euripidean tragedy, however, we see a sharp moral and aesthetic decline. Here Zeller echoes the standard Schlegelian line while anticipating Nietzsche’s criticisms of a decade later:

42 Translations are based on Reichel’s 1885 English version of the third edition (substantially modified), but I include only passages that also appear in the second edition of 1859. The second part of the third edition, covering Socrates and Plato, did not appear until 1875.

As an artist, Euripides is only too glad to replace poetic immediacy with calculation, unified perception (*einheitlichen Anschauung*) with discriminating reflection. Through individual scenes of an exciting and terrifying character, choral songs often only loosely connected with the plot, rhetorical declamation and discoursing, he seeks to produce an effect which would arise more purely and profoundly from the coherence of the whole. Likewise, we see that harmony between moral and religious life, which spoke to us so soothingly in Sophocles' plays, dissolve (*sich auflösen*).

ZELLER 1859, 10

Euripides still clings to the belief in the value of piety and moderation—Zeller cites several famous maxims from his plays and fragments—but his moral outlook is in constant struggle against the intellectual currents of his age: “as a pupil of philosophers, as a kindred spirit to the better sophists, he is too far removed from the old way of thinking to give himself freely and with full conviction to the traditional faith and morality” (10–11). Zeller credits the ancient testimony that Euripides studied with Anaxagoras; as for the poet's connection to Socrates, he says only that while Euripides may have known his younger contemporary, he could not have been his pupil (11, n. 1). If Euripides' plays do not entirely repudiate custom, they are pervaded by a new spirit of doubt and hard-headed realism: “The grand poetic worldview, the moral-religious way of looking at human life, has yielded to a skeptical voice, to disintegrating reflection, to naturalistic pragmatism” (11).

For Zeller, then, as for Nietzsche, Euripides is the poet of the new rationalism, though not of “Socratic” rationalism. Zeller's main concern is to distinguish Socrates from his predecessors, to show how he revolutionized the intellectual life of Greece at the end of the fifth century. Moreover, in contrast to Nietzsche, Zeller regards Socrates' achievement as an unambiguously positive development. Once criticism had exposed the weak foundations of popular religion and morality, there was no hope of simply returning to the old ways—as for example Aristophanes desired (21–4). But the pernicious consequences of skepticism were becoming ever more apparent, as society neared the brink of moral collapse (27). A more solid ethical foundation needed to be laid down:

Traditional morals had had to give way before the spirit of innovation, because they rested only upon instinct and habit (*nur auf Instinkt und Gewohnheit*), and not on any clear recognition of their necessity. Whoever, therefore, was to undertake a lasting restoration of moral life, had to found it upon knowledge (*Wissen*).

ZELLER 1859, 28

The challenge was to establish a new “scientific ethics” (*wissenschaftliche Ethik*), which would reach beyond custom and sense experience to grasp the “immutable essence of things amidst changing appearances” (29). This challenge was met by Socrates and his dialectical method.

Zeller sees Socrates as making three main contributions to the history of philosophy. The first is epistemological: whereas sophistic criticism had been merely negative, and the study of nature too dogmatic, Socrates joins the analytical tendency of the sophists with the system-building aspirations of natural philosophy. The aim of the dialectical method, which Socrates introduces and Plato and Aristotle carry further, is the precise examination of foundational concepts—not to destroy belief in them but to discover their true basis.⁴³ Only by sifting through the ambiguities and contradictions of common opinion, and rejecting whatever proved deficient, could “real knowledge” be obtained (78). Second, Socrates expands the range of scientific investigation by applying his method of inquiry to ethical questions. His “chief idea” (*grosser Gedanke*), according to Zeller, is “the transformation and restoration of moral life through science (*Wissenschaft*)” (80). Having lived through the consequences of a morality based on instinct and obedience to custom, Socrates concludes that “true morality” requires “clear and certain knowledge” of the norms of action (97). He even determines that knowledge is the *whole* of morality—hence the fundamental principle of Socratic ethics: “all virtue consists in knowledge (*alle Tugend im Wissen bestehe*).” Here, however, in Zeller’s view, Socrates puts the matter too crudely, and his central doctrine has to be improved upon first by Plato and further by Aristotle. Socrates likewise fails to advance beyond the general definition of virtue as knowledge of “the good” (101), which he tends to reduce either to custom or to utility. His ethical views are furthermore contradictory: while he claims that virtue is the highest end of life, he also praises it for the advantages it brings (104–5). Again, it was left to Plato and Aristotle to build on the Socratic framework and discover the precise relationship between knowledge, virtue, and the good.

Socrates’ third major contribution is the example of his life, and even more so his death, which provides an enduring testament to the dignity of philosophy. Zeller concludes this section of his history with an analysis of Socrates’ trial and execution. In punishing Socrates, Zeller argues, the Athenians thought they were defending the old morality against the onrush of innovation (162). But they failed to recognize their own corruption, and that Socrates was trying

43 “In this way reflection, which by means of sophistry had destroyed the older philosophy, was taken into the service of the new philosophy” (30). On Zeller’s Aristotelianizing reading of Socrates in the context of nineteenth-century scholarship, see Montuori 1981, 33.

to preserve traditional values by examining, and thereby shoring up, their foundations: "This is the peculiar tragic turn in the fate of the philosopher—that here the reformer, who is the true conservative, is persecuted in the name of a superficial and imaginary restoration" (163). The real victims of the tragedy, however, were the people of Athens; Socrates' death was ultimately a triumph for his reputation and his cause:

What Socrates in pious faith expressed after his sentence—that to die would be better than to live—fully proved itself in his deeds. The image of the dying Socrates (*Das Bild des sterbenden Sokrates*) must have afforded to his pupils, in the highest degree, what it now after centuries affords to us—a ringing testimony to the greatness of the human spirit, to the power of philosophy, and to the indomitability of a pious and pure mind, resting in clear conviction ... Through his death the stamp of higher truth was impressed on his life and words; the sublime repose and blessed cheerfulness with which he faced it was the true confirmation of all his convictions, the highpoint of a long life dedicated to science (*Wissenschaft*) and virtue (*Tugend*).

ZELLER 1859, 164–5

The contrast with Nietzsche's approach in his Basel lecture could not be much starker. The reasons for his audience's outrage should also now be clear. Zeller's *Philosophie der Griechen* was the most authoritative work of its kind; its portrait of Socrates, at least in broad outline, would have been known to several of the colleagues and members of the educated public gathered in the city museum. The image of Socrates that the young philologist conjured before them was both familiar and disturbingly alien. As in Zeller, Nietzsche's Socrates embodies the existential commitment to reason as the guide to a happy life. "Virtue is knowledge": in both accounts this simple equation captures the essence of the Socratic outlook.⁴⁴ But whereas Zeller praised Socrates as a moral reformer and scientific revolutionary of the highest worth, Nietzsche now casts him as the destroyer of Greek artistic culture. One of Zeller's main tasks, as we saw, was to distinguish Socrates' reformatory project from the wider critical spirit represented by Euripides. In his lecture, Nietzsche invites his audience to view the poet and the philosopher through a new—actually old, Aristophanic—lens, as merely different faces of the same corrosive rationalism. If Zeller ever finds fault with Socrates, it is because he only lays down the foundations of

44 See also Ueberweg 1863, 54: "Sokrates identificirt Tugend und Wissen"; cf. Lange 1866, 16; Alberti 1869, 100–1.

"true science" (*wahre Wissenschaft*, 30) and does not proceed to build on them; but his beneficent influence on Greek philosophy, and indeed the course of human thought, is never called into doubt. Nietzsche's Socrates is also the forerunner of *Wissenschaft*, but as such he is the eternal opponent of *art* (545), the true measure of cultural achievement.

Nietzsche's lecture therefore maintains the received picture of Socrates' significance, but gives a radically different assessment of the *value* of his practice and influence. This would have been shocking enough; but perhaps even more outrageous, at least to his university colleagues, was his near complete disregard for the norms of his discipline. The evidence for his claims about Euripides and Socrates consists of a few passages from Aristophanes' *Frogs* and some comic fragments quoted in Diogenes Laertius. Nowhere does Nietzsche deign to engage with the vast scholarship of his contemporaries, Zeller chief among them.⁴⁵ The style of Nietzsche's lecture thus reflects the substance of its critique, as well as its author's growing disillusionment with the philological profession.⁴⁶ The young devotee of Schopenhauer and Wagnerian acolyte had begun to find the ideals of *Altertumswissenschaft* at odds both with his self-conception and with his hopes for a revitalized Germany. In his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* (1872), Socrates will play the same crucial role he does in the earlier lecture, bridging a revisionist narrative of Greek antiquity to an attack on modernity's highest values.

4 Socrates in Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*

Undaunted, maybe even encouraged by the scandal of his public lecture, Nietzsche would heed the advice of his friends in Tribschen and develop his "new idea" at greater length. A couple of months later, he tells Rohde that he is gathering his energies for a book: "I'm afraid it won't look philological; but who can deny his own nature? Now starts my period of *offense* (*Anstosses*) ... Theme and title of my book-of-the-future: 'Socrates and Instinct.'"⁴⁷ His plans for the book evolve over the following year, but Socrates is always central to his conception. In June 1871, Nietzsche arranges for a revised and expanded

45 A few months after the lecture, Zeller wrote Nietzsche an admiring letter thanking him for his study on the sources of Diogenes Laertius (*KGB* 11/2, 211–12). On Nietzsche's *Laertiana*, see Barnes 1986; Jensen 2013, 25–34.

46 On Nietzsche's relationship to nineteenth-century *Altertumswissenschaft*, see Jensen 2013, ch. 2.

47 Letter dated 30 April 1870 (*KSB* 3, 120); cf. Silk and Stern 1981, 43–5. Nietzsche's phrase *Zukunft-Buch* echoes the title of Wagner's 1861 essay *Zukunftsmusik*.

version of the lecture, retitled “Socrates and Greek Tragedy” and with a Foreword to Richard Wagner, to be privately printed in an edition of thirty copies and distributed to his friends.⁴⁸ This new version would appear at the heart of *The Birth of Tragedy*, published at the end of the year.⁴⁹

In its essentials Nietzsche's account of the death of tragedy at the hands of Socrates and Euripides is the same, though it is now woven into a grand narrative of the rise and fall of tragic culture, and its rebirth in the modern age. Socrates' status as a world-historical figure is only enhanced by the larger context. Indeed, *BT* develops the image of Socrates from the earlier lecture in three main ways. First, Nietzsche complicates his prior picture by contrasting Socratism with two other psychological “drives” (*Triebe*), the Apollonian and the Dionysian, which after a long struggle unite to form the art of tragedy. Whereas in the Basel lecture Socrates was an embodiment of “Apollonian clarity” (544), Nietzsche is now concerned to distinguish the desire for knowledge from the Apollonian drive, which is satisfied with beautiful *illusions* (§1).⁵⁰ Socrates, moreover, is no longer just a “symbol” of greater forces; Nietzsche now depicts him as a *god* (*BT* §12):

Euripides was in a certain sense merely a mask: the deity (*Gotttheit*) that spoke through him was not Dionysus, nor yet Apollo, but an entirely newborn daemon bearing the name of *Socrates*. That was the new opposition: the Dionysian and the Socratic, and that conflict was to be the downfall of Greek tragedy.⁵¹

KSA 1, 83, tr. WHITESIDE, modif.

The effect of introducing Socrates as a deity is to universalize the rationalist tendency he represents. The Socratic drive for knowledge is not a phenomenon peculiar to late fifth-century Athens, but a deep, seemingly ineradicable element of the human psyche, parallel to the Dionysian need for intoxication and the Apollonian delight in formal beauty. At the same time, Socrates is an abnormality—“a monstrosity *per defectum*” (*BT* §13):

48 KSA 1, 603–40; cf. Nietzsche's letter to Rohde dated 7 June 1871 (*KSB* 3, 197). For the original Foreword, which Nietzsche rewrote for *BT*, see *NF* February 1871, 11[1] (*KSA* 7, 351–7). On the publication history of *SGT*, see Schaberg 1995, 19–22.

49 See Schaberg 1995, 23–6.

50 The precise relationship between the Socratic and the Apollonian remains a vexed question; see Burnham 2014. The Basel lecture refers once to Dionysian dithyrambs, so the contrast between the Socratic and the Dionysian is arguably implicit.

51 Cf. *BT* §13, where Socrates is a “daemonic power” and a “demigod” (*KSA* 1, 90).

While in all productive people instinct is the power of creativity and affirmation, and consciousness assumes a critical and dissuasive role, in Socrates [through his *daimonion*] instinct becomes the critic, consciousness the creator ... And what we see is a monster *defectus* of any mystical talent, so that Socrates might be described as the very embodiment of the *non-mystic*, whose logical nature has developed through superfetation, just as excessively as instinctive wisdom in the mystic.

KSA 1, 90

Socrates represents the logical drive in its purest form, unchecked by competing psychic forces. While Apollo and Dionysus also need moderating in order for culture to flourish, their contributions to humanity are never “questionable” for Nietzsche in quite the same way.

A second and related development is that Nietzsche makes more explicit Socrates' connection to the present, portraying him as the archetype of a “previously unheard-of life form ... *theoretical man*” (98). This is the practitioner of modern *Wissenschaft*, who takes infinite delight in uncovering new truths and disabusing himself of old illusions. But theoretical man's entire activity, according to Nietzsche, rests on a “profound *delusion* (*Wahnvorstellung*), which first enters the world in the person of Socrates: the unshakeable belief that reasoning ... can penetrate to the depths of being, and that it is capable not only of knowing but even of *correcting* being” (99).⁵² In what may be a deliberate echo of Zeller's closing paragraph, Nietzsche traces the inspiration for modern scientific optimism to the figure of Socrates drawn in Plato's *Phaedo* (BT §15):

Thus he appears to us as the first man who was able not only to live by that [optimistic] instinct of *Wissenschaft*, but—a far greater accomplishment—to die by it as well. That is why the image of the *dying Socrates* (*das Bild des sterbenden Sokrates*), man freed by knowledge and reasons (*Wissen und Gründe*) from the fear of death, became the heraldic shield over the portals of *Wissenschaft*, reminding all who entered of their mission: to make existence appear intelligible and consequently justified.

KSA 1, 99

52 On Socratism itself as a form of illusion or delusion (*Wahn*), see Came 2013, 212–13; Gemes and Sykes 2014, 94–6. For the influence of Schopenhauer and Wagner on Nietzsche's conception of *Wahn*, see Gemes and Sykes 2014, 96–102.

The desire for a complete and systematic understanding of the world has driven higher culture ever since. Socrates thus emerges, on Nietzsche's account, as the "turning point and vortex of world history" (100), providing the educated with a "spur to existence" (101) for generations to come.⁵³

In a third change from his Basel lecture, Nietzsche now represents Socrates' attack on the artistic instincts of the Greeks as itself an expression of instinct. The "dialectical drive for knowledge" (111), moreover, is fundamentally an *artistic* drive, since the web of scientific understanding never reaches the essence of things, but casts a phenomenal veil over existence, protecting us from its terrible truths.⁵⁴ But with the Kantian discovery of the limits of human reason and the basic irrationality of the world, Nietzsche suggests, Socratic man has begun to require new forms of artistic consolation. In a surprising turn, Nietzsche resurrects another image from Plato's *Phaedo* (*BT* §14):

Where art was concerned, the despotic logician had the sense of a lacuna, a void, something of a reproach, of a possibly neglected duty. He told his friends in prison that he often had a dream in which he was told: "Socrates, make music!" Until shortly before his death he drew comfort from the idea that his philosophy was the highest of the arts, spurning the notion that a deity might remind him of "vulgar, popular music." To salve his conscience entirely, he finally resolved in prison to make the very art he held in such low esteem. And with this attitude he wrote a hymn to Apollo and put some Aesopian fables into verse ... This voice of the Socratic dream vision is the only indication that he ever gave any consideration to the limitations of logic. He was obliged to ask: "Is that which is unintelligible to me necessarily ignorant? Might there be a realm of wisdom (*Weisheit*) from which the logician is excluded? Might art even be a necessary correlative and supplement to *Wissenschaft*?"

KSA 1, 96

Just as the "dying Socrates" serves as an emblem of theoretical man, the "music-making Socrates" heralds a further stage of culture, when the discovery of the limits of *Wissenschaft* awakens "a new form of knowledge (*Erkenntnis*), *tragic knowledge*, which needs art as both protection and remedy, if it is to be

53 Later in *BT*, Nietzsche refers to modern scientific culture as "Alexandrian": "The whole of our modern world is caught up in the net of Alexandrian culture, and its ideal is theoretical man, armed with the highest powers of knowledge and working in the service of *Wissenschaft*, whose archetype and progenitor is Socrates" (116).

54 In the Basel lecture, by contrast, Nietzsche insists that "science and art exclude each other" (*KSA* 1, 545).

endured" (101).⁵⁵ The *Phaedo* passage, of course, says nothing about another realm of "wisdom" or an existential need for art. Plato's Socrates is no less convinced than he was throughout his life that philosophy is the "greatest music" (61a); but in case the dream meant that he should make music in the ordinary sense—and since he had time alone to kill before his execution—he composed a hymn to Apollo as well. In *BT*, this pious gesture becomes an act of tragic resignation, symbolic of the death of modern scientific optimism and the awakening of a new artistic consciousness. Here Nietzsche establishes a pattern that will recur in later works—and in even more radical form—of refashioning material from the ancient Socratic sources to serve his rhetorical ends.

Nietzsche does not elaborate on his vision of a "music-making Socrates" as portending a new artistic type, but he seems to imagine that the art of the future will be *informed* somehow by the recognition of reason's limits, perhaps inspiring a new kind of tragic myth, or a new Socratic-Dionysian art form.⁵⁶ In his notebooks, he mentions Shakespeare as an example of the new type: "Shakespeare [is] the poet of fulfillment, he brings Sophocles to perfection, he is the *music-making Socrates*."⁵⁷ Another obvious candidate is Wagner, who saw his own music-dramas as uniting the spirits of Shakespeare and Beethoven. In *BT*, however, Nietzsche is content to leave the possibilities open: §15 concludes by envisaging only "ever-new configurations of genius, and especially of the *music-making Socrates*" (102).

But perhaps above all what Nietzsche has in mind with the idea of a "music-making" Socrates is the peculiar blend of historical analysis, Schopenhauer-inspired philosophizing, and Wagnerian myth-making that distinguishes his own writing in *BT*. In the letter to Rohde describing the furor caused by his Basel lecture, Nietzsche had remarked: "*Wissenschaft*, art, and philosophy are now growing together inside me so fully that I will someday give birth to centaurs."⁵⁸ *The Birth of Tragedy* is one such centaur. Although it

55 In his "Socrates and Tragedy" lecture, Nietzsche had doubted that Socrates' music-making would have propitiated the muses (KSA 1, 544).

56 The final ten sections of *BT* emphasize a reawakened need for tragic myth in the post-Enlightenment age.

57 *NF* end of 1870–April 1871, 7[131] (KSA 7, 193), tr. Löb, modif. Cf. 7[134] (KSA 7, 193–4). In an early plan for *BT*, Nietzsche calls Shakespeare "the poet of tragic knowledge" (7[130] [KSA 7, 193]); see also 7[166] (KSA 7, 202–3): "Euripides and Socrates signify a new beginning in the development of art: *out of tragic knowledge*. This is the task of the future, which so far only Shakespeare and our music have completely appropriated. In this sense Greek tragedy is only a preparation ..." At one point, Nietzsche suggests "Socrates, make music!" as a motto for his project on tragedy (*NF* 1871, 9[39] [KSA 7, 287]).

58 Letter written in two parts, dated end of January and 15 February (KSB 3, 95).

presents a critique of modern scientific optimism, Nietzsche does not reject the aims of *Wissenschaft* altogether. In the opening sentence, he declares: “We shall have gained much for the science of aesthetics (*aesthetische Wissenschaft*) when we have perceived not only through logical insight, but through the immediate certainty of intuition (*unmittelbaren Sicherheit der Anschauung*), that art derives its continuous development from the duality of the *Apollonian* and the *Dionysian*” (25). The book thus announces itself as a contribution to knowledge, but with “intuition” (*Anschauung*) replacing reasoned argument from textual and archeological evidence as the basic epistemic mode.⁵⁹ It is only with the help of a privileged kind of aesthetic perception, Nietzsche suggests, that one can grasp the real essence of tragedy (the “Idea” in Schopenhauer’s sense).⁶⁰ The same view of historiography guides his account of tragedy’s demise. Whatever their textual basis, Nietzsche evidently sees his claims about Euripidean rationalism, the Socratic drive for knowledge, and Socrates’ belated turn to music as reflecting a deeper truth about fifth-century Athens and the perpetual struggle between art and science. *The Birth of Tragedy*, for Nietzsche, marks the birth of a new model of *Altertumswissenschaft*, which advances our understanding of the past (and its significance to the present) only by casting aside traditional scholarly norms.⁶¹

His academic colleagues did not see it that way.⁶² Friedrich Ritschl, Nietzsche’s mentor at Leipzig and main advocate for the Basel professorship,

59 On Nietzsche’s notion of *Anschauung* in *BT*, which derives (problematically) from Schopenhauer’s aesthetics, see the excellent discussion in Jensen 2013, ch. 3. Cf. Schmidt 2012, 88–91.

60 Cf. *KGW* 11/3, 367: “If the philologists fail, and are reduced to mere scholars, it is because they lack aesthetic sense” (quoted at Jensen 2013, 71).

61 Two years later in *Schopenhauer as Educator* (1874), Nietzsche would write: “[T]o the genius, who gazes upon things as a poet does, with pure and loving eyes, and cannot immerse himself too deeply in them, grubbing around in countless strange and perverse opinions is the most repugnant and inappropriate occupation imaginable. The learned history of the past has never been the business of a true philosopher; neither in India nor in Greece; and if a professor of philosophy involves himself in such work he must at best be content to have it said of him: he is a fine classical scholar, antiquary, linguist, historian—but never: he is a philosopher. And that, as remarked, is only at best: for most of the learned work done by university philosophers seems to a classicist to be done badly, without scientific rigor and mostly with a detestable tediousness. Who, for example, can clear the history of the Greek philosophers of the soporific miasma spread over it by the learned, though not particularly scientific (*nichtallzuwissenschaftlichen*), and unfortunately all too tedious, labors of Ritter, Brandis, and Zeller? I for one prefer reading Diogenes Laertius to Zeller, because the former at least breathes the spirit of the philosophers of antiquity, while the latter breathes neither that nor any other spirit” (*Untimely Meditations* 111 §8 [*KSA* 7, 416–17], tr. Hollingdale).

62 For a survey of responses, see Jensen 2013, 75–80.

was disappointed and baffled by his former star pupil. In a politely tolerant letter, he assures Nietzsche that he is too old and too much of a historicist by nature for philosophical world-redemption, but worries that the book might inspire in the youth only “a callow contempt for scholarship” (*unreifen Missachtung der Wissenschaft*), instead of a new artistic sensibility.⁶³ The infamous pamphlet by the young Wilamowitz would appear at the end of May, attacking the book mainly on philological grounds. “Mr. Nietzsche by no means comes across as a scholarly researcher (*wissenschaftlicher Forscher*),” Wilamowitz writes.⁶⁴ “I would love to deserve the insult of being a ‘Socratic man’ ... In any case, I want nothing to do with N, the metaphysician and apostle ... imagined genius and impudence are directly proportionate to ignorance and lack of love for truth” (4). Nietzsche’s method “is the exact opposite of the type of research which the heroes of our (and ultimately, every real) *Wissenschaft* have pursued.” His claims about Socrates and Euripides revive “an old, corny fairy tale” (18). In the concluding paragraph, Wilamowitz calls on Nietzsche to “step down from the lectern from which he should be teaching *Wissenschaft*”—that is, resign his professorship (24).⁶⁵

Curiously, Nietzsche bristled at the suggestion that his book was a failure of scholarship. He enlisted Rohde to write a lengthy reply in the form of an

63 Letter dated 14 February 1872 (*KGB* 11/2, 541–3), responding to a letter of 30 January, in which Nietzsche expresses his “astonishment” not to have heard from his teacher: “I thought that if ever you had met with something promising (*Hoffnungsvolles*) in your life, it might be this book, promising for our *Altertumswissenschaft*, promising for what Germany means, even if a number of individuals might be ruined by it ... My first concern is to win over the younger generation of philologists, and I would think it shameful if I did not succeed in doing so” (*KSB* 3, 281–2, tr. Middleton, modif.). In his diary from the period, Ritschl calls the book “an inspired waste of energy” (*geistreiche Schwiemelei*) (quoted at Pletsch 1992, 143). And in a letter to Wilhelm Vischer, the man who originally hired Nietzsche at Basel, Ritschl writes: “But our Nietzsche! ... It’s remarkable how in one person two souls live next to each other. On the one side, the strictest method of academic scientific (*wissenschaftlicher*) research ... on the other this fantastically overreaching, over-enthusiastic, beat-you-senseless, Wagnerian-Schopenhauerian art-mystery-religion-crap (*Kunstmysterienreligionsschwärmerei*)! ... What really makes me mad is his impiety against his true mother, philology, who had suckled him at her breast” (*KSA* 15, 46–000, tr. Jensen 2013, 79–80). On Nietzsche and Ritschl, see also Jensen 2014.

64 Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 2000, 3, tr. Postl, modif.

65 In his memoirs, Wilamowitz recalls how the “rape of historical facts and all philological method” drove him to battle on behalf of his “endangered science” (*bedrohte Wissenschaft*). “This was desperately naïve. There was never any intention of scientific knowledge (*wissenschaftliche Erkenntnis*); it wasn’t at all really about Attic tragedy, but about Wagner’s music-drama, which simply wasn’t my language” (*Erinnerungen* 1, 129, my translation).

open letter to Wagner, who also had published a response to Wilamowitz.⁶⁶ Rohde's heroic effort—and certainly Wagner's intervention—did nothing to salvage Nietzsche's academic reputation (or his own).⁶⁷ Nietzsche's reaction is puzzling: since the scandal of his Basel lecture two years earlier, he knew full well how radical his approach would seem. But perhaps he hoped the book's rhapsodic style would lift his readers to a vantage from which the finer details of philology lose their significance.⁶⁸ The later Nietzsche would have more sympathy for his early critics. In the "Attempt at a Self-Criticism" that prefaces the 1886 edition, he finds genuine insights in the book but deplores its manner of expression (§1):

badly written, clumsy and embarrassing, its images frenzied and confused, sentimental, in some places saccharine-sweet to the point of effeminacy, uneven in pace, lacking in any desire for logical purity, so sure of its convictions that it is above any need for proof, and even suspicious of the *propriety* of proof, a book for initiates, "music" for those who have been baptized in the name of music and who are related from the first by their common and rare experiences of art ...

KSA 1, 14

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- 66 The public exchange, which ends with a follow-up from Wilamowitz, is reproduced in Gründer 1969. See Nietzsche's letter to Rohde dated 16 July 1872: "For us [Wilamowitz] represents a 'false' philology, and the success of your piece will be to show him as such to others. I shall write a very serious and forceful letter to Ritschl, asking him to give up the incomprehensible idea that we intend it as an attack on *Altertumswissenschaft* (or on *historiography*)" (KSB 4, 23, tr. Middleton). Nietzsche cites a passage from Aristophanes' *Frogs* in defense of his view of Socrates and tragedy. "Tell the philologists that my *Socrates* is all of a piece; I feel so strongly the contrast between *my* description and the others, which all seem so dead and moldy" (25).
- 67 See the letter to Malwida von Meysenburg dated 7 November 1872: "You see, my *Birth of Tragedy* has made me the most offensive (*anstössigste*) philologist of the present day, to defend whom could be a true marvel of courage, for everyone is of a mind to condemn me ... At root there is a mix-up. I did not write for philologists, although these—if only they *could*—might be able to learn even some purely philological matters from my book. Now they turn on me bitterly, and seem to think I have committed a crime, because I did not first think of them and their understanding. Rohde's act too will have no outcome, for nothing can bridge the enormous gap" (KSB 4, 81–2, tr. Middleton).
- 68 Even one of his most sympathetic readers, Paul Deussen, was ambivalent: "The historical Socrates still has many meritorious sides, which you do not touch. In the condemnation of the fundamental Socrates I unfortunately cannot disagree with you, as I myself am such a person" (letter to Nietzsche dated 25 April 1872 [KGB 11/2, 596]).

Nietzsche ought to have followed the example of Socrates in his cell, and “made music” in the more familiar sense: “It should have been *singing*, this ‘new soul’, not speaking! What a shame that I dared not say what I had to say then as a poet: I might have been able to do it! Or at least as a philologist ...” (15).

5 The Decadent Socrates in Nietzsche's Late Works

Socrates makes only sporadic appearances in Nietzsche's published work between *BT* (1872) and the completion of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–5).⁶⁹ He comes back into focus in the final three years of Nietzsche's productive life (1886–8), to play a major role in the much-vaunted project of a “revaluation of all values” (*Umwertung aller Werthe*). Nietzsche retains the frame of his earlier *Sokratesbild*, but fleshes it out in new ways. Socrates is still the enemy of art and instinct, the father of ethical rationalism, and the herald of modern *Wissenschaft*; he is now also a member of the plebeian rabble, an arch-deceiver of himself and others, and fundamentally a *decadent*.⁷⁰ In his late autobiographical work, *Ecce Homo* (1888; published in 1908), Nietzsche identifies the analysis of Socratism as one of *BT*'s two “crucial innovations” (the other being the concept of the Dionysian): “Socrates recognized for the first time as the instrument of Greek disintegration (*Auflösung*), as a typical decadent. ‘Rationality’ (*Vernünftigkeit*) against instinct. ‘Rationality’ at any price as dangerous, as a form of violence that undermines life!”⁷¹ The early

69 *Untimely Meditations* (1873–6): KSA 1, 285–6, 401, 412; *Human, All-Too-Human* (1878–80): KSA 2, 28, 99, 122, 216–17, 255, 282, 284, 543, 584–5, 591–2; *Daybreak* (1881): KSA 3, 23, 34, 37, 108, 147, 151, 174, 275, 315; *The Gay Science* (1882): KSA 3, 403, 405, 555, 569–70. Nietzsche's notebooks reveal sustained reflection on Socrates in the spring and summer of 1875 (collected in KSA 8).

70 Nietzsche tends to use the French terms *décadent* and *décadence*. On his notion of decadence, see, in connection with Socrates, Ahern 1995, ch. 3, and, more generally, Huddleston 2019.

71 “The Birth of Tragedy” §1 (KSA 6, 310). In the opening section of the 1886 “Attempt at a Self-Criticism,” Nietzsche suggests that his earlier contrast between tragic pessimism and scientific optimism had been too crude, and that the latter might itself be a symptom of an underlying pessimism: “The Socratism of morality, the dialectics, modesty and cheerfulness of theoretical man—could not that very Socratism be a symptom of decline, fatigue, infection, and the anarchical dissolution of the instincts? ... And science (*Wissenschaft*) itself, our own science—what does all of science mean as a symptom of life? Might the scientific approach be nothing but fear, flight from pessimism? A subtle form of self-defense against—the *truth*? And, morally speaking, something like cowardice and falsehood? Amorally speaking, a piece of cunning? Oh Socrates, Socrates, was that, perhaps, *your* secret? Oh, secretive ironist, was that, perhaps, *your*—irony?” (KSA 1, 12–13).

Nietzsche did in fact portray Socrates as the champion of reason against the unconscious instincts and as the agent of Greek cultural decline.⁷² But there was no sign that Socrates himself was a “typical decadent” or that Socratism somehow threatens not just artistic creativity and tragic insight but “life” itself. Also new and striking is the suggestion that rationality is a form of “violence” (*Gewalt*), a tyrant within the community of the soul. The later Nietzsche’s revisionist account of *BT* thus reflects an important shift in his aims and priorities, and in the use to which the image of Socrates is put. This section examines Nietzsche’s refashioning of Socrates into a primary target of his mature critique of “morality” (*Moral*).

In the preface to *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887), Nietzsche declares himself the first to question the “value” (*Werth*) of morality (§6):

Let us speak it aloud, this *new challenge*: we need a *critique* of moral values, *for once the value of these values must itself be called into question* [...]. One has taken the *value* of these “values” as given, as a fact, as beyond all calling-into-question; until now one has not had even the slightest doubt or hesitation in ranking “the good” as of higher value than “the evil,” of higher value in the sense of its furtherance, usefulness, beneficity—with respect to man *in general* (taking into account the future of man). What? if the opposite were true? What? if a symptom of regression also lay in the “good,” likewise a danger, a temptation, a poison, a narcotic through which perhaps the present were living *at the expense of the future*? Perhaps more comfortably, less dangerously, but also in a reduced style, on a lower level? ... So that precisely morality would be to blame if a *highest power and splendor* of the human type—in itself possible—were never attained? So that precisely morality were the danger of dangers? ...

KSA 5, 253, tr. CLARK AND SWENSEN

The term “morality” in Nietzsche’s later works signifies a cluster of evaluative attitudes and claims. Compassion and selflessness, rationality, objectivity and truth, equality and democracy, peace and humility, purity of soul, and

Nietzsche contrasts the Socratic flight from pessimism with a Dionysian “pessimism of *strength*”: “An intellectual predilection for what is hard, terrible, evil, problematic in existence, arising from well-being, overflowing health, the *abundance* of existence” (12). With *BT*’s analysis of Socratism, he says, he had got hold of an entirely new problem: “the *problem of science itself*” (13).

72 In *BT* §13, Nietzsche writes that it was no more possible for the Athenians to refute Socrates than it was for them to endorse “his disintegrative (*auflösenden*) influence on the instincts” (KSA 1, 91).

contentment—these all count as “good”; cruelty and egoism, instinct and subjective will, aristocratic elitism, war and ambition, bodily desire, pain and suffering—these count as “evil” from the point of view of morality.⁷³ These values have diverse cultural expressions, ranging from Christianity to the modern university to socialism to Wagnerian romanticism. Central to morality on Nietzsche's conception are two related views about the status of moral values. The first is that morality provides the sole standard of goodness. The second is that the claims of morality are binding for all human beings, irrespective of their varying abilities and preferences, social status, physical make-up, and goals.⁷⁴ What is truly good for one person is good for everyone, and this goodness consists in moral goodness.

The main strategy of Nietzsche's revaluation of moral values is to treat morality as a contingent natural phenomenon, whose existence and sway over humans can be explained by some underlying psycho-physical condition. His claim is that moral values serve the needs of those who are physically and psychologically out of sorts, providing relief from their own poor constitutions and protection from other healthier types. Nietzsche's appeal to concepts such as “health,” “sickness,” “strength,” “weakness,” “nobility,” “decadence,” etc., aims both to position his critique outside of the perspective of morality (“beyond good and evil”) and to shake his readers' commitment to the supremacy of morality. At the same time, Nietzsche traces the historical origins of moral values as a way of challenging their claim to universality. Far from imposing eternal demands on all rational creatures, morality is an *idiosyncrasy*, devised (consciously or not) by a failed type of human being for its own self-preservation and self-affirmation. Crucially, on Nietzsche's account, morality is not only a symptom of degeneration; it is also a cause, an enervating force in the lives of some who could flourish without it.⁷⁵

73 For a thorough discussion of “morality” in Nietzsche's pejorative sense, including its theoretical underpinnings, see Leiter 2015, ch. 3.

74 See Leiter 2015, 83–90.

75 See *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am a Destiny” §7: “What! Is humanity itself decadent? Has it always been?—What is certain is that it has been *taught* decadence values, and *only* decadence values, as the highest values. The morality of un-selfing is the morality of decline *par excellence*, the fact ‘I am in decline’ translated into the imperative ‘thou *shalt* decline’—and *not only* into an imperative! [...] There remains the possibility here that humanity is not what is in degeneration, only that parasitical type of human, *priests*, who, with their morality, have lied themselves into the position of determining values,—who see Christian morality as their means of wielding *power* ... And in fact, that is *my* insight: the teachers, the leaders of humanity, all of them theologians, were also decadents: *this* explains why all values were revalued into ones hostile to life, *this* explains morality ...

Given this general strategy, it is easy to see why Nietzsche makes Socrates a focus of his critique. In the first place, Socrates presents perhaps the most difficult case for the claim that morality serves the needs of the sick and inwardly self-loathing.⁷⁶ Who was more robust and cheerful than Socrates, and who was a greater champion of morality? If Nietzsche can show that even Socrates was a decadent, then no one—the Socratically-minded reader included—is free from suspicion. For both Nietzsche and his contemporaries, moreover, Socrates is the first great moralist in the Western tradition, and the exemplar of the examined life for all future generations. It is through Socrates' efforts and inspiration that moral values become the only values worthy of the name.⁷⁷ To expose his example as an idiosyncrasy, indeed a perversion of nature, is to impugn modern man's Socratic inheritance. Lastly, Socrates lends himself especially well to Nietzschean revaluation: from the earliest sources on, his significance has always been contested. There is a sense in which there is no Socrates, but only a series of Socratic images.⁷⁸ Nietzsche is free to draw on this material as he likes, and rework it for his own rhetorical purposes. So, for example, we find Socrates' famed irony—his habit of not quite saying what he means, or stating as much as he knows—turned into an anguished recognition of his own moral and intellectual fraudulence.

The *locus classicus* for Nietzsche's later treatment of Socrates is the second chapter of *Twilight of the Idols* (1888), titled "The Problem of Socrates."⁷⁹ Divided into twelve mostly brief sections, the chapter is a *tour-de-force* reimagining

Definition of morality: morality, the idiosyncrasy of decadents with the ulterior motive of taking revenge on life—and successfully" (KSA 6, 372–3).

76 The figure of Christ is another obvious candidate, but the focus on Socrates allows Nietzsche to target even those atheists and "free-thinkers" who disavow Christianity yet subscribe to moral values. Socrates also comes first, and Nietzsche views Christianity as a fundamentally Socratic religion—in the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* he calls it "Platonism for the 'people'" (KSA 5, 12); cf. Nehamas 1998, 140.

77 See *NF* fall 1887, 9[159]: "The common thread running through all of European history since *Socrates* is the attempt to make *moral values* supreme over all other values; so that they should be the guide and judge not only of life, but also of

(1) Knowledge

(2) The arts

(3) Political and social aspirations" (KSA 12, 429, tr. Hill and Scarpitti).

Cf. *NF* end of 1886–spring 1887, 7[20] (KSA 12, 302–3); November 1887–March 1888, 11[375] (KSA 13, 167–9); spring 1888, 14[87] (KSA 13, 265), 14[94] (271–2), 15[5] (403).

78 Porter 2006, 412–13; see also the Introduction to this volume.

79 See also *NF* spring 1888, 14[92] (KSA 13, 268–70), 14[111] (288–9). For an alternative reading of "The Problem of Socrates," arguing that Nietzsche (as part of his broader project of *amor fati*) ultimately "affirms" Socrates, see Conway 2017. For detailed commentary on the chapter, see Sommer 2012, 259–85.

of the life and death of Socrates. Nietzsche organizes his discussion around two ancient anecdotes, which he not only reinterprets but rewrites to suit his rhetorical aims, taking the unscholarly approach to his sources even further than he did in *BT*.⁸⁰

The chapter begins with an allusion to Socrates' enigmatic last words, as reported in Plato's *Phaedo*:

The wisest men in every age have reached the same conclusion about life: *it's no good ...* Always and everywhere, you hear the same sound from their mouths,—a sounds full of doubt, full of melancholy, full of exhaustion with life, full of resistance *to* life. Even Socrates said as he died: “living—that means being sick for a long time: I owe a cock to Asclepius the Savior.” Even Socrates had had enough.

KSA 6, 67, tr. NORMAN

The overall aim of the chapter is to challenge the *consensus sapientium* (“consensus of the wise”) that death is a welcome escape from the wretchedness of life. According to Nietzsche, the unanimity of philosophers and theologians proves nothing about the true value of living; it merely demonstrates their “*physiological* agreement” and their *need* to view existence negatively (68). Indeed, Nietzsche writes, judgments about life's value are neither true nor false (“*the value of life cannot be estimated*”) but are significant only as symptoms of an individual's psycho-physical condition. What their consensus shows is that the great sages of the past were actually decadents, who lacked the health and fortitude to affirm their earthly lives.⁸¹ Nietzsche's task, therefore, is not to argue that the sages were wrong in their evaluation of existence, but to debunk their evaluation's claim to universal normative significance by suggesting that they were too sick for life. We are bound to agree with them only if we are unhealthy too.

Nietzsche bases his revaluation of the *consensus sapientium* on a case study of Socrates, the most potent apparent counter-example to his picture of the decadent sage (hence the repeated “Even (*Selbst*) Socrates” in the chapter's opening lines). The crux of Nietzsche's argument is his now famous reading of Socrates' dying words, which are taken to reveal the philosopher's innermost

80 See also Anderson 2017.

81 As in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche traces this insight to *BT* at the start of §2: “This piece of irreverence, that the great sages are *types of decline*, first dawned on me in just the sort of case where scholarly and unscholarly prejudice would be working most strongly to prevent it: I recognized Socrates and Plato as symptoms of decay (*Verfalls-Symptome*), as agents of Greek disintegration, as pseudo-Greek, as anti-Greek” (KSA 6, 67–8).

attitude to life. Nietzsche first put forward his interpretation in §340 of *The Gay Science* (1882):

I admire the courage and wisdom of Socrates in everything he did, said—and did not say. This mocking, love-sick monster and piper of Athens, who made the most audacious youths of Athens tremble and sob, was not only the wisest chatterer of all time; he was equally great in silence. I wish he had remained silent also in the last moments of his life—perhaps he would then belong to a still higher order of minds. Whether it was death or the poison or piety or malice—something loosened his tongue and he said: “O Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius.” This ridiculous and terrible “last word” means for those who have ears: “O Crito, *life is a disease*.” Is it possible that a man like him, who had lived cheerfully and like a soldier in plain view of everyone, was a pessimist? He had merely kept a cheerful demeanor while all his life hiding his ultimate judgment, his inmost feeling! Socrates, Socrates *suffered from life*! And then he still avenged himself—with this veiled, gruesome, pious, and blasphemous saying. Did a Socrates really need *revenge*? Was there one ounce too little magnanimity in his overabundant virtue?—O friends! We must overcome even the Greeks!

KSA 3, 569–70, tr. NAUCKHOFF

Nietzsche seizes on Asclepius' role as the god of healing: Socrates, on his interpretation, is acknowledging his debt to the god, to be paid through ritual sacrifice, for the gift of deliverance from the sickness that was his life. What may seem to naïve readers to be a simple expression of civic piety is in fact a spiteful rebuke to bodily existence. With his dying words, Socrates revokes the gift of his cheerful and steadfast bearing, which provided a model for the human spirit's triumph over earthly hardships. It had all been a noble façade, claims Nietzsche, and in his final moments Socrates had let it fall.⁸²

When Nietzsche revisits Socrates' death in *Twilight of the Idols* (TI), he transforms what the philosopher “meant” by his last words into what he “said”: “living—that means being sick for a long time: I owe a cock to Asclepius the Savior.” The TI version takes us even further from Plato's original: “O Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius; but all of you render what is due and don't be

82 For an analysis of GS §340 (and the subsequent two sections, in which Nietzsche introduces the notion of “eternal recurrence” and then the figure of Zarathustra) in connection with Plato's *Phaedo*, see Loeb 2010, ch. 2.

neglectful.”⁸³ More than 2400 years later, there is still nothing close to a consensus on the Platonic Socrates’ meaning.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, Nietzsche’s reading (at least in broad outline) is anticipated by at least one ancient author and is the most common interpretation among modern scholars, though few cite Nietzsche’s influence.⁸⁵

Without trying to adjudicate the question yet again, we can note what Nietzsche alters in his version, and for what ends. In addition to rewriting his gloss from *GS* §340 (“*life is a disease*”) as a direct quotation (“living—that means being sick for a long time”), Nietzsche substitutes an “I” for Plato’s “we”—thus transforming the joint obligation between Socrates and Crito into a solitary confession of *Weltschmerz*. Indeed, the *TI* version leaves Crito out of the picture altogether. Nietzsche’s suppression of the first-person plural is surely useful to his reading: the Platonic Socrates’ words suggest that (at least) Crito also owes the cock to Asclepius (however we interpret the debt); but if only Socrates is being cured of the disease of living, it is a mystery why Crito should be indebted too. In Nietzsche’s reformulation, moreover, the debt is not simply to Asclepius, but to Asclepius *the Savior* (*dem Heilande Asklepios*). The term *Heiland* has powerful overtones, standardly referring to Christ as Redeemer of mankind.⁸⁶ With the addition of a single word, Nietzsche refracts Socrates’ pious gesture through the lens of Christian soteriology.⁸⁷

83 *Phd.* 118a7–8: ὦ Κρίτων ... τῷ Ἀσκληπιῷ ὀφείλομεν ἀλεκτρούνα· ἀλλὰ ἀπόδοτε καὶ μὴ ἀμελήσητε.

84 Peterson (2003, 33–6) lists twenty-one distinct interpretations before presenting her own: Socrates is acknowledging his debt to Asclepius for helping him die in the same way he lived—with virtue and equanimity. See further the interpretations in Madison 2002; Wilson 2007, ch. 3; Wells 2008.

85 See Most 1993, 100 (with references); cf. Madison 2002, 421 n. 2 for further references. The ancient source is the Neoplatonist Damascius, writing about nine centuries after Plato (*In Phd.* 285 Westerink; cf. 317). For objections to the Nietzschean view, see Most 1993, 101–4; Peterson 2003, 36–9. Nehamas 1998, ch. 6, defends Nietzsche’s reading against Foucault’s anti-pessimistic interpretation of Socrates’ last words from his 1984 lectures at the Collège de France (now available in English translation in Gros 2011); for Nehamas’ critique of Most, see endnote 9 on 246–8. On the possible influence of Nietzsche’s teacher at Schulpforta, Karl Steinhart, on his reading of Socrates’ last words, see Sommer 2012, 262–3.

86 As in the Lutheran hymn, *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, and the opening chorale of Wagner’s *Die Meistersinger*, *Da zu dir der Heiland kam*. The epithet “Savior” (*Sôtêr*) applied to Asclepius is not attested before Aelius Aristides (2nd c. CE); see *Hieroi Logoi* 300, 3; 330, 8; cf. Syrianus *In Met.* 26, 2; Procl. *In Alc.* 166, 2. On the Asclepius–Christ connection in the Church Fathers, see Edelstein and Edelstein 1945, 1, 132–38; Dörnemann 2003, ch. 10.

87 In the penultimate section of the chapter, Nietzsche says that Socrates himself was seen by the Greeks as a “savior” (*Heiland*); he then makes the Christian connection explicit: “Socrates was a misunderstanding; *the whole morality of improvement, including that*

The persuasive force of Nietzsche's reading also depends on what it omits—Socrates' actual final words as reported by Plato's character Phaedo: "but you [pl.] render what is due and don't be neglectful." Socrates gives two commands in the second-person plural, presumably addressed to the friends who have gathered to see him off. While the natural object of the verbs ἀποδίδωμι ("render") and ἀμελέω ("neglect") would seem to be the sacrifice—in which case they would *all* owe the debt to Asclepius—Socrates may be urging his friends to fulfill a different, perhaps more general, obligation.⁸⁸ The last word he utters, ἀμελέω, echoes his instructions a few pages earlier, when Crito had asked what they can do for him once he is gone:

Just what I always say, Crito, and nothing particularly new: that if you take care of yourselves (ὁμῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιμελούμενοι ὑμεῖς), whatever you do will be a favor to me and mine, and to yourselves, even if you don't agree with me now. If, on the other hand, you neglect your own selves (ὁμῶν μὲν αὐτῶν ἀμελήτε), and refuse to live following the tracks, as it were, of today's conversation and our previous ones, then however vehemently you agree with me now, you won't achieve anything.

Phd. 115b5–c1, tr. LONG, modif.

Read in this light, Socrates' dying words lose at least some of their mystery. There is apparently no final dropping of the mask, no surrender to world-weary pessimism, but a reminder to his friends to live by their commitments even when he is no longer there to guide them.⁸⁹ Nietzsche strips away the surrounding context, leaving Socrates an isolated figure, alone with his conscience, as he realizes the futility of his life.⁹⁰ But however one interprets Socrates' last words, an honest reading, one might think, at least needs to account for their

of Christianity, was a misunderstanding ..." (*KSA* 6, 72–3). Cf. *NF* summer 1886–fall 1887, 5[50]: "Greek philosophy from Socrates on as symptom of sickness and therefore preparation for Christianity" (*KSA* 12, 202, my translation). See also *GS* §370: "he who suffers most and is poorest in life would need mainly mildness, peacefulness, goodness in thought and in deed—if possible, also a god who truly would be a god for the sick, a 'savior' (*Heiland*); as well as logic, the conceptual comprehensibility of existence—for logic soothes, gives confidence—in short, a certain warm, fear-repelling narrowness and confinement to optimistic horizons" (*KSA* 3, 620–1).

88 Peterson 2003, 46, notes that Socrates' ἀλλ' is adversative, indicating a shift of focus ("as for other matters"). The sense could be: "Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius; but as for you all, render to me what you owe me."

89 See also Madison 2002, 430–435; Peterson 2003, 46.

90 See also *Beyond Good and Evil* §191 (*KSA* 5, 112).

communal and hortatory significance. Nietzsche instead rewrites them as a soliloquy, thereby discarding, not discharging, the interpretive burden.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty for the Nietzschean reading is that its portrait of Socrates clashes not only with the rest of Plato's *Phaedo*, but with the whole body of ancient Socratic literature. In fact, however, Nietzsche's view *exploits* the contrast between Socrates' standard representation and his deathbed confession of pessimism. Again, his claim is that all along, deep down, Socrates suffered from life, despite every appearance to the contrary.⁹¹ This is a clever rhetorical ploy, because it means that any potential piece of counterevidence can be immediately discounted, or even redeployed to support his reading. But if Nietzsche rested his case entirely on a tendentious rewriting of Socrates' dying words, it would be too easy for his readers to dismiss it. In the middle sections of the chapter, therefore, he turns to another Socratic anecdote, as a witness to the philosopher's degenerate instincts. We will see that Nietzsche's methods for extracting testimony for his claims are no less rough than in his handling of the *Phaedo* passage.

After some general reflections on the *consensus sapientum* in the second section, Nietzsche begins the third by returning to the "problem" of Socrates:

Socrates was descended from the lowest segment of society: Socrates was plebeian. We know, we can still see how ugly he was. But ugliness, an objection in itself, was almost a refutation for the Greeks. Was Socrates Greek at all? Often enough, ugliness is a sign of crossbreeding, of *arrested* development due to crossbreeding. In other cases it appears as a *declining* development. Anthropologists specializing in crime tell us that the typical criminal is ugly: *monstrum in fronte, monstrum in animo*. But criminals are decadents. Was Socrates a typical criminal?—At the very least, this is not contradicted by that famous physiognomic judgment that sounded so offensive to Socrates' friends. A foreign expert in faces who had come to Athens told Socrates to his face that he *was a monstrum*,—that he was a repository for all the vices and bad appetites (*er berge alle schlimmen Laster und Begierden in sich*). And Socrates simply replied: "You know me, sir!"⁹²

KSA 6, 68–9

Here Nietzsche retells the story of Socrates' encounter with Zopyrus the physiognomist, which traces to the dialogue *Zopyrus* by Phaedo of Elis (the

91 Something like this view is shared by Tertullian; see Franek (in this volume), 436–7.

92 Silk 2007, 50–1 n. 49, notes the New Testament overtones of Socrates' reply.

historical person characterized as the narrator of Plato's *Phaedo*), and which shows up in a number of later ancient authors.⁹³ For Nietzsche, the tale suggests that Socrates' decadent nature, far from being veiled beneath a cloak of virtue, was there for all to see.⁹⁴ The earliest surviving source for the Zopyrus anecdote is Cicero's paraphrase in the *Tusculan Disputations*:

Some people are said to be irascible, pitying, envious, and so on, "by nature." These have, as it were, a poor constitution, and yet they can be healed. There is a story to that effect about Socrates. A certain Zopyrus claimed that he could discern a person's nature from his physiognomy. This man gave out a list of Socrates' faults (*vitia*) in the midst of a gathering and was laughed at by all the rest, for they were aware that Socrates did not exhibit those faults. Socrates, himself, however, supported Zopyrus, saying that they were indeed inborn in him, but that he had cast them out by reason (*cum illa sibi sic nata, sed ratione a se deiecta*).⁹⁵

Cic. *Tusc.* 4.80, tr. GRAVER

Once again, we find Nietzsche freely reworking the ancient material to suit his rhetorical aims. The versions of the story vary in subtly important ways, but in each case Socrates follows his praise of Zopyrus with the qualification that he had managed to *overcome* his unruly appetites. Nietzsche, however, delays the punchline for several paragraphs, and instead has Socrates "simply" (*bloss*) confirm the diagnosis: "*Sie kennen mich, mein Herr!*"⁹⁶ Nietzsche's goal, at this point, is to focus the reader's attention on Socrates' original nature—"the admitted chaos and anarchy of his instincts" (69). His anarchic instincts,

93 On the *Zopyrus*, see Rossetti 1980; Boys-Stones 2004; Boys-Stones 2007; Rossetti 2015; Di Lanzo 2017.

94 Cf. *NF* summer–fall 1884, 26[185] (*KSA* 11, 198).

95 In *De Fato* 10–11, Cicero reports that Zopyrus diagnosed Socrates as thick-witted and "addicted to women" (*mulierosum*), prompting Alcibiades to laugh out loud: "But it is possible that these defects (*vitia*) may be due to natural causes; but their eradication and entire removal (*extirpari autem et funditus tolli*), recalling the man himself from the serious vices to which he was inclined, does not rest with natural causes, but with will, effort, training (*sed in voluntate studio disciplina*)" (tr. Rackham).

96 Nietzsche's retelling echoes the German translation (published in Ritschl's journal, *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, in 1872) of a Syriac version of pseudo-Plutarch's now-lost Greek retelling (Gildemeister and Bücheler, quoted in Rossetti 1980, 186): "*In Wirklichkeit hat dieser Mann nicht gelogen, denn von Natur neige ich sehr zur Begierde, durch angewendete Sorgfalt aber bin ich, wie ihr mich kennt.*" ("In actual fact, this man has not got it wrong, because by nature I am very much inclined towards lust [sc. for women]; but through careful practice I am as you know me" [tr. Boys-Stones 2007].)

on Nietzsche's reading, are the key to understanding everything else about Socrates' character, both his lifelong devotion to dialectic as well as his final relief to be rid of himself.

Nietzsche's task in the next several sections is to explain how Socrates' ethical rationalism ("reason = virtue = happiness: that most bizarre of all equations, which is opposed to all the instincts of the earlier Greeks" [§4, 69]), if it arose from a condition of psycho-physical degeneration, could have conquered the healthier natures of aristocrats like Plato.

With Socrates, Greek taste suddenly changed in favor of dialectic: what really happened here? Above all, a *noble* taste was defeated; with dialectic, the rabble rises to the top. Before Socrates, dialectical manners were rejected in good society: they were seen as bad manners, they humiliated people. The young were warned against them. People were generally distrustful of reasons being displayed like this. Honorable things, like honorable people, do not go around with their reasons in their hand. It is indecent to show all five fingers. Nothing with real value needs to be proved first. Wherever authority is still part of the social fabric, wherever people give commands rather than reasons, the dialectician is a type of clown: he is laughed at and not taken seriously.—Socrates was the clown who *made himself be taken seriously*: what really happened here?⁹⁷

§5, KSA 6, 69–70

Nietzsche goes on to portray dialectic as an expression of plebeian *ressentiment*—a means for the oppressed to gain power over their social superiors: "dialectic lets you act like a tyrant; you humiliate the people you defeat. [...] Is dialectic just a form of *revenge* for Socrates?"⁹⁸ The puzzle is why the "noble" Greeks came to embrace dialectic, to wield Socrates' tool of revenge *against themselves*.⁹⁹ Nietzsche's initial answer is that it appealed to their agonistic drive: it offered the young Athenians in Socrates' circle a novel mode of competition. But this does not explain why this and not some other type of contest drew them. In §9, Nietzsche claims that the instincts of the

97 Cf. *NF* summer 1875, 6[13] (KSA 8, 102), where Socrates is "revenge" for Thersites, the lowly character in Homer's *Iliad*.

98 KSA 6, 70. For Socrates as a plebeian, see also *NF* summer–fall 1873, 29[175] (KSA 7, 705); spring–summer 183, 7[23] (KSA 10, 249); spring 1884, 25[297] (KSA 11, 87); summer–fall 1884, 26[285] (KSA 11, 226); fall 1887, 9[20] (KSA 12, 347).

99 Migotti 1998, 755–60, uses Nietzsche's analysis of Socrates to help explain the revaluation of values in the first essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality*.

aristocratic Greeks were not as healthy as they once were; Socrates saw that they were decadents too:

He looked *behind* his noble Athenians; he understood that *his* case, his idiosyncrasy of a case was not an exception any more. The same type of degeneration was quietly gaining ground everywhere: old Athens was coming to an end.—And Socrates understood that the world *needed* him,—his method, his cure, his personal strategy for self-preservation ... Everywhere, instincts were in anarchy; everywhere, people were five steps away from excess: the *monstrum in animo* was a universal danger. “The drives want to act like tyrants; an even stronger *counter-tyrant* needs to be invented” ...

KSA 6, 71

Just as in *BT* Socrates stood for a much wider phenomenon, the drive for knowledge, the decadent Socrates of Nietzsche's later works is symptomatic of a more general sickness in Greek culture. But he also seemed to offer the Greeks a cure, a way to subjugate the wayward instincts that were causing them to suffer.

Nietzsche now returns to Socrates' encounter with Zopyrus: “When the physiognomist revealed Socrates to himself as a pit of bad appetites, the great ironist dropped another clue that gives us the real key to his nature. ‘This is true,’ he replied, ‘but I became master over them all (*aber ich wurde über alle Herr*).” Here Nietzsche adds the crucial qualification that he had omitted in §3, though his reading of it differs markedly from the ancient sources. In each of those accounts, the Zopyrus story is a testament to the transformative power of philosophy. Even someone as innately vicious as Socrates can be made virtuous through the discipline of reason.¹⁰⁰ The ancient sources disagree, however, about the nature of Socrates' transformation. In Cicero's version, the inborn vices have been “cast out” (*deiecta*) by reason: his face is only a vestige of his former condition; his soul has achieved a more beautiful harmony, as evidenced by his whole way of life. In the other sources, Socrates appears to say he has retained his natural tendencies, but they are in no way determinative of his actions: he is able to be virtuous in spite of them.¹⁰¹ But all the versions

100 See Boys-Stones 2004, 10. Cf. Julian *Ep.* 82, 445a: “Phaedo ... supposed that nothing was beyond the cure (*ἀνίατον*) of philosophy, but that everyone can be purified of any kind of life through it—of their behavior, desires, everything, in a word, of the sort” (quoted in Boys-Stones 2007).

101 See Boys-Stones 2007, 26–8.

suggest that the physiognomist's art, at least when applied to Socrates, is of limited value, because it fails to reveal the central thing about him—the thing his laughing friends all recognize: his extraordinary discipline and sexual restraint.

Nietzsche stands this traditional reading on its head. Socrates' rationally ordered life is no sign of victory over his unruly instincts, but just a further expression of decadence. What it means for Socrates to have become "master" (*Herr*) over his lustful drives, on Nietzsche's account, is simply that *reason* (*Vernunft*) was installed as a tyrant in his soul. Socrates and his contemporaries needed reason to tyrannize their anarchic instincts in order to avoid total dissipation:

The fanaticism with which all of Greek thought threw itself on rationality shows that there was a crisis: people were in danger, they had only one option: be destroyed or—be *absurdly rational* ... [...] Reason = virtue = happiness only means: you have to imitate Socrates and establish a permanent state of *daylight* against all dark desires—the daylight of reason. You have to be clever, clear and bright at any cost: any concession to the instincts, to the unconscious, leads *downwards* ...

§10, *KSA* 6, 72

The image of reason as a "tyrant" serves Nietzsche's rhetorical aims in two ways. First, it suggests that reason has no *normative authority* in the soul; to the extent Socrates succeeded in mastering his appetites, he did so only through force and repression, not persuasion and habituation.¹⁰² Second, a soul ruled by a tyrant (as opposed to a legitimate ruler) might seem to lack *stability*: reason must remain ever vigilant to keep order among its unwilling subjects and protect its rule.¹⁰³ So, Socrates' physical ugliness, on Nietzsche's reading, is not a vestige of his inborn but superseded nature; it is a witness to the ongoing struggle within his afflicted soul, which his commitment to "rationality at any cost" only confirms: "a cold, bright, cautious, conscious life without instinct, opposed to instinct, was itself just a sickness, another sickness—and in no way a return to 'virtue', to 'health', to happiness ..." (§11, 73).

¹⁰² Compare the passage from *Ecce Homo* quoted at the start of this section, where Nietzsche calls rationality a "form of violence" (*Gewalt*). In *Beyond Good and Evil* §191, he suggests that Socrates himself recognized the arbitrariness of valuing reason over unreason; cf. *NF* summer–fall 1884, 26[356] (*KSA* 11, 244).

¹⁰³ Here Nietzsche clearly takes aim at the image of the philosophical city and soul from Plato's *Republic*. On the idea of reason "tyrannizing" over Socrates' soul, see also Huddleston 2017, 154–7.

And Socrates knew all of this, Nietzsche suggests in the chapter's final section:

—Did he understand this, that cleverest of all self-deceivers? Did he say this to himself in the end, in the *wisdom* of his death-bed courage? ... Socrates *wanted* to die:—Athens did not give him the poisoned drink, he took it *himself*, he forced Athens to give it to him ... “Socrates is no doctor,” he said quietly to himself: “death is the only doctor here ... Socrates was only sick for a long time ...”

KSA 6, 73

Returning to the scene of Socrates' execution, Nietzsche puts a further spin on his famous last words, this time replacing them with a *sotto voce*, world-weary confession. The third-personal “Socrates” speaks to the philosopher's self-alienation, as though he is seeing the man he really is for the first time: not a savior but a symptom and cause of degeneration. His lifelong quest to obey the Delphic command and “know himself” was at last fulfilled.

6 Conclusion

The lesson for Nietzsche's readers is plain: insofar as we are inclined to follow Socrates and value reason over instinct, we are decadents too, condemned to lives fighting an incurable disease. In both his early and later works, Nietzsche uses the figure of Socrates to reflect modernity's highest ideals back to it, but in an unflattering and disorienting light. *The Birth of Tragedy* casts Socrates as the enemy of artistic creation and the herald of the European Enlightenment that gives the guiding norms for the study of antiquity in Nietzsche's own time. The philologists among his readers are to see their own profession as a fetter on higher culture, which can no longer be sustained by the Socratic drive for knowledge, but depends on Apollonian and Dionysian illusions in order to thrive. For their encouragement, Nietzsche offers the “music-making” Socrates as a symbol of theoretical man's awakening to his tragic condition and need for art—“art” understood in a wide sense to include the sort of mytho-poetic *Altertumswissenschaft* for which *BT* provides a model.

Nietzsche's endgame in his later works is far less clear. In *BT*, there is little suggestion that the Socratic drive is an aberration, even if Socrates himself can be called a “monstrosity” for his excessively rational nature.¹⁰⁴ “The

104 In §18, Nietzsche characterizes the “Socratic delight in knowledge” as a product of the “voracious will” (KSA 1, 115), in parallel to the Apollonian and Dionysian illusions (of

Problem of Socrates" paints a different and less hopeful picture: Socrates' high valuation of reason and truth is now seen as an idiosyncrasy, a symptom of enervated instincts and the desire to escape life. And perhaps the Socratic ideal appeals to the very same motives in his readers. This time, however, there is no "music-making" Socrates to console or inspire us, only the image of a tired failure and a pessimist. It is hard to know what can be gained by seeing ourselves in this light; if we are looking for a cure, Nietzsche implies, it is already too late for us.¹⁰⁵ Nietzsche undertakes his later "revaluation of all values" mainly with an eye toward an unknown "future" (see the subtitle of *Beyond Good and Evil*: "Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future")—and as a test of his own strength (*TI*, "Preface")—not to improve his contemporary readers or help them live better lives. In this way, too, his project seems thoroughly un-Socratic. Socrates, of course, did not have any readers, but presumably because he saw writing as a distraction from his most urgent task: conversing, face-to-face, with his fellow Athenians about the best way to live.

Whatever his ultimate aim in portraying a "decadent" Socrates, we can assume that Nietzsche did not want his account ignored. His early critique of Socratism and the ideals of *Wissenschaft* seems to have had little effect on classical scholarship in general and Socratic reception in particular.¹⁰⁶ That is not surprising, since his rhetorical method eschews the standards of argument and evidence his Socratically-minded readers expect. In other words, they will want *reasons* for accepting Nietzsche's portrait of Socrates over Plato's or Xenophon's (or any other). Even if in a sense all we have of Socrates is a contested legacy, there are constraints (imposed partly by tradition, partly by one's imagination) on the extent to which one can revise one's idea of him. The persuasive challenge for Nietzsche is even greater in "The Problem of Socrates," where he abandons any philological pretensions and *rewrites* the ancient sources to serve his polemic. Of course, to demand that he defend his account with reasons is to remain ensconced within the perspective of Socratic values, which (according to Nietzsche) only shows how unhealthy one actually is. In order for Nietzsche's polemic to convince, it seems, the Socratic ideal cannot yet be the reader's ideal. But maybe persuasion or conviction is not

beauty and metaphysical consolation, respectively). This suggests that the Socratic drive is as essential to the human psyche as the others.

105 There are, however, places in the later works where Nietzsche holds out the possibility that human beings are not beyond hope, e.g., in the *Ecce Homo* passage quoted at n. 75 above, and most famously in his visions of the *Übermensch*.

106 On Nietzsche's contribution to the study of Greek antiquity (especially through his conception of the Dionysian and his focus on the archaic period), see Lloyd-Jones 1982, 165–81; Henrichs 1984; Mansfeld 1986, 55–8. On his influence on the concept of "Presocratic" philosophy, see Laks 2017, 19–31.

the goal, and it is enough for Nietzsche to arouse suspicions in his readers—to make them wonder if they know Socrates as well as they thought. Hence the insistent posing of questions in “The Problem of Socrates”: a good Socratic, Nietzsche knows, will not let them go unexamined.¹⁰⁷ So perhaps Nietzsche is content to impress us with a haunting image; with each visitation, Socrates again becomes strange to us—and we to ourselves.¹⁰⁸

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¹⁰⁷ In a passage from *Ecce Homo* (“Why I am a Destiny §1), Nietzsche casts his revaluative project in strikingly Socratic terms: “*Revaluation of all values*: that is my formula for an act of humanity’s highest self-examination (*Selbstbesinnung*), an act that has become flesh and genius in me” (KSA 6, 365).

¹⁰⁸ I am grateful to Christopher Moore and Chris Sykes for feedback on earlier versions of this chapter.

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PART 7

The Twentieth Century



Wittgenstein's Reception of Socrates

Oskari Kuusela

A main theme of this chapter is Ludwig Wittgenstein's critical reception of Socrates in the 1930s, during which time Wittgenstein was developing a new philosophical methodology that he described as being antithetical to that of Socrates and best explained by way of this contrast. In particular, Wittgenstein is critical of an unexamined assumption relating to conceptual unity that seems to inform Socrates' philosophical engagements, according to which one can always define a concept, or cases that fall under it, with reference to a feature or features common to all relevant cases. However, when accounting for Wittgenstein's reception of Socrates, one needs to explain why the kind of critical remarks composed in the 1930s do not reoccur in Wittgenstein's writings after this period, and why none of these critical remarks make it into his mature main work, the *Philosophical Investigations*. What made Wittgenstein change his mind about how to explain or introduce his later philosophy? My explanation is twofold: (i) Wittgenstein came to find his 1930s remarks on Socrates misleading for reasons connected with his rejection of philosophical theses and questions relating to the justification of philosophical methodology. (ii) Ultimately he came to recognize a possibility of reinterpreting Socrates' method/s of employing definitions as consistent with his own methodology. Thus, rather than as an antithesis to Socratic philosophy, Wittgenstein's later philosophy is better seen as giving it a new twist. Following this lead, I identify five important uses for definitions whose philosophical significance does not rest of the assumption of simple conceptual unity (in the preceding sense). Four of these are evidently present in Plato's Socratic dialogues.

1 Wittgenstein's Remarks on Socrates and/or Plato

Wittgenstein makes numerous remarks on Socrates and/or Plato¹ in his *Nachlass*, lectures, recorded discussions, and in an unfinished collaborative

1 It is unclear whether and how carefully Wittgenstein distinguishes between the views of Socrates and those of Plato. However, there are indications that he identifies Socrates (as described by Plato) as a philosopher looking for definitions, and Plato as someone postulating

work with Friedrich Waismann (published as *The Voices of Wittgenstein*). Most of these remarks concern philosophical methodology and the relevant assumptions of Socrates' philosophical approach, whereby Socrates functions as a foil for Wittgenstein's own views (see section 2). It is noteworthy that most of these remarks were written during the early 1930s when Wittgenstein was still developing the views put forward in the *Investigations*,² and almost none of these remarks make it into this work. The only exception are two remarks on the *Theaetetus*, and the view therein that what words refer to must be something extant in reality, and that consequently there ought to be simple elements in reality that constitute the ultimate referents of words (PI §§46, 518; Pl. *Tht.* 201e–202d).

To account for Wittgenstein's reception of Socrates one must explain why only these two remarks are included in the *Investigations*, and why Wittgenstein no longer wanted to contrast his approach with Socrates as he had done in the 1930s. If the explanation is that he abandoned or changed the views he had been developing, the 1930s remarks should perhaps not be evoked in explaining Wittgenstein's mature reception of Socrates. However, why relevant remarks were left out of the *Investigations* seems best explainable in quite different terms. Rather than concerning Socrates' and Wittgenstein's philosophical approaches or methodologies generally, the remarks included in the *Investigations* concern a *specific philosophical problem* regarding the possibility of false judgments, first articulated in *Theaetetus* (187d–190e), and to which the *Tractatus* proposed a solution (TLP 4.03–4.0311). My explanation is that, while Wittgenstein still considers it instructive to discuss issues relating to his earlier postulation of logically simple objects/elements as the referents of completely analyzed expressions, he now thinks it misleading to discuss the contrast between his and Socrates' approaches in general terms. He intends the contrast to pervade the *Investigations* itself, and to manifest itself in his discussions of specific philosophical problems and their solutions. This should make it obvious that his aim is not conclusive theses about the essence of his objects of investigation, such as exemplified by the exceptionless definitions that Socrates appears to look for. As Wittgenstein remarks in *Investigations* §133: “—Instead, we now demonstrate a method, by examples [...].”³

ideas or forms. Since all relevant remarks seem to conform to this pattern, I will assume it as intended, but the difference from Plato will be relevant only in §3. Thanks to Catherine Rowett for pointing out the distinction and the accordance of Wittgenstein's remarks with it.

2 The *Investigations*, or its so-called Part I, was completed during the late 1930s and first half of the 1940s.

3 For discussion justification of this interpretation of §133, see Kuusela 2008, 46–53.

What exactly is problematic about explaining the contrast between Socratic and Wittgensteinian approaches through general assertions? To begin with, if the demonstration through examples is successful, no general assertions regarding the difference between the approaches are necessary. This does not yet make such remarks problematic, but two problems do arise for Wittgenstein's 1930s-style remarks about the claimed advantages of his own approach. First, by the time he completed the *Investigations* manuscript, Wittgenstein had come to regard as highly problematic the *Tractatus*' programmatic way of introducing its method of logical analysis, one that relies on abstract and general considerations and arguments. In particular, instead of giving examples of the application of this method, the *Tractatus* postulates an ideal level of "real signs" that underlies ordinary expressions, and at which the Tractarian terms of analysis find their proper application (Ms142, 88). Wittgenstein comments on this retrospectively:

It is of the greatest importance that we always think of an example with a calculus of logic to which it has an application, and that we don't give examples and say they are not really the ideal ones, which we don't yet have. This is the sign of a false conception. (Russell and I have in different ways laboured on it. [...])

Ms115, 55–56; cf. Ms111, 118

Just like the *Tractatus*' abstract arguments, any programmatic claims about the advantages of Wittgenstein's later approach would be hollow, if they were not justified by examples demonstrating what Wittgenstein's approach can actually achieve. Such claims would therefore be misleading, because ultimately Wittgenstein's approach cannot be justified in this way.⁴ Secondly, should Wittgenstein claim that his approach, as opposed to Socrates', reveals what we *must* understand by philosophy—the true essence of the discipline that all particular instances must conform to—he would be falling into a contradiction both with his rejection of philosophical theses and in his

4 In fact the remark just quoted is first formulated in 1931 (quoted version in 1932–33), when Wittgenstein still portrayed the contrast between his and Socrates' approach in general terms. However, it would not be surprising if Wittgenstein would have realized only later the full implications of the remark for the presentation of his new philosophy. Since this philosophy does not regard logic as concerned with hidden logical structures, it might not seem to run the same or an analogous risk as the *Tractatus*. The first, abandoned, attempt to compose the *Investigations* in a form that places weight on examples is from late summer 1936 (Ms115, 118–292). I return to the notion of ideality in sections 2 and 3.

argument against Socrates. For, by such theses Wittgenstein understands just this kind of assertion regarding the essential features of the objects of study, claimed to be necessary for the possession of a certain essence. (For Wittgenstein's notion of philosophical theses, see Kuusela 2008.)

Finally, a third reason, to be discussed in section 4, may be given for why Wittgenstein does not contrast his approach with Socrates' in general terms in the *Investigations*. Insofar as the goal of spelling out conclusive overarching theses is not assumed, Socrates' actual practice of discussion, as described by Plato, turns out to be compatible with Wittgenstein's approach in various key respects. This possibility of reinterpreting Socrates' philosophical practice then provides a further explanation for the omission of the 1930s-style remarks from the *Investigations*. From Wittgenstein's mature perspective his approach should be compared with that of Socrates *both* with regard to their differences, emphasized in the 1930s remarks, and similarities, which those remarks fail to acknowledge (cf. PI §122). Included in the *Investigations* these remarks would therefore be misleading.

Nevertheless, Wittgenstein may have overestimated the capacity of the readers of the *Investigations* to grasp the contrast between his and Socrates' approaches. Instead they have often construed Wittgensteinian conceptual or grammatical investigation (cf. PI §90; Z §458) as a novel way to establish philosophical theses about, for example, linguistic meaning, the nature of language, rule-following, and so on (Kuusela 2008). Consequently, Wittgenstein's 1930s remarks on Socrates seem well worth revisiting in order to clarify the contrast.

2 Wittgenstein's Critical Reception of Socrates in the Early 1930s

I quote three closely related remarks as the basis for discussion, the first one from 1932:

Socrates pulls up the pupil who when asked what knowledge is enumerates cases of knowledge. And Socrates doesn't regard that as even a preliminary step to answering the question.

But our answer consists in giving such an enumeration and a few analogies. (In a certain sense we are always making things easier and easier for ourselves in philosophy.)

MS114, 108; cf. PG 120–121

Two other remarks, one from the previous year and another from Wittgenstein's collaborative work with Waismann, make the point clearer:

Socrates asks the question what knowledge is and he isn't content with an enumeration of instances of knowledge. But we don't worry so much about this general concept & are happy if we understand shoe-making, geometry, etc. [...]

We don't believe that only someone who can provide a definition of the concept "game" really understands a game.

I'm making it easier and easier for myself in philosophy. But the difficulty is to make it easier for oneself and yet to remain precise.

MSIII, 69–70; cf. BT 54, 56e/Ts213, 69–70, Ts212, 226–227; cf. *Tht.* 146d–147c

I can characterize my standpoint no better than by saying that it is the antithetical standpoint to the one occupied by Socrates in the Platonic dialogues. For if I were asked what knowledge is, I would enumerate instances of knowledge and add the words "and similar things." There is no shared constituent to be discovered in them since none exists. The traditional conception of the use of concept-words hangs together with the idea that the meaning of a word is something that must be present at the same time as meaningful use is made of the word. [...] If it is objected that the words "and similar things" do not give the concept a boundary, I can only say that the application of concept-words is in most cases actually not bounded. If one compares a concept, as Frege did, with an area in the plane, one could say that the use of a concept corresponds to an area with blurred boundaries. If for our purposes we juxtapose with this blurred area a sharply bounded one and in certain cases even replace the one by the other, one can hardly be surprised that there is no sharply bounded concept to be found which has the same boundaries as the one without sharp bounds. For we do not actually assert that language is a game which is played according to rules (for otherwise we are asserting something false), but we *compare* the phenomena of language with such a game, and the one is more or less similar to the other.

VW 33–35/Ms302, 14

These remarks make several important points to be explicated shortly. However, admirers of Plato and/or Socrates could be excused for suspecting that Wittgenstein gets things all wrong. To begin with, how could the enumeration and description of empirical cases help us to understand

the essential characteristics of, for instance, knowledge? All that such an approach seems able to deliver is empirical observations concerning instances of knowledge, but without any basis for distinguishing their accidental features from what makes them instances of knowledge. For is not our ability to distinguish instances of knowledge from anything else, and to enumerate them, itself dependent on our grasp of what is essential to knowledge? But if enumerating cases thus presupposes a grasp of what is essential, how can the former clarify the latter? Moreover, it is unclear how an enumeration and description of cases could help us understand our objects of investigation anyway, since ultimately a compilation of such descriptions, if accurate, ends up being equally complex and diverse, or almost so, as the class of objects we originally sought to understand. Furthermore if we are to describe reality in all its complexity and blurredness, does this not make it impossible to achieve exactness or precision, and therefore clarity, in philosophy? All we can do now is to describe a multitude of actual cases, and insofar as the borderlines between different concepts are vague, we can only record this vagueness. But if Wittgenstein wants us to give up on ideals such as precision and clarity, why should we be interested in this watered-down philosophy? I agree that without satisfactory answers to these concerns we may well be justified in dismissing Wittgenstein as misguided. Let us therefore look more closely into these issues.

Here it is relevant that Wittgenstein shares a certain starting point with Socrates, namely the idea that rather than aiming to discover new knowledge, philosophy aims to clarify what we already know. As Wittgenstein writes in 1931: "But ultimately I can't say more than what everyone knows. [...] (Socratic recalling on the truth.)" (MS110, 131–132; cf. PI §§89, 109, 599). Unlike Socrates seems to do, however, Wittgenstein does not maintain that what we remind ourselves of in philosophy is knowledge which our immortal souls possess from times before this life (cf. *Phd.* 72e; *Meno* 81c). Rather, what we try to remind ourselves of, according to Wittgenstein, is something we implicitly know in our capacity as linguistic agents and competent albeit not infallible users of relevant concepts. Like Socrates, Wittgenstein therefore maintains that what we seek to understand in philosophy underlies our grasp of particular cases, including our ability to enumerate and describe them. Hence, he is not *simply* concerned with enumeration, but with clarifying the basis of our grasp of particular cases as whatever they are instances of. With regard to this task, however, Socrates makes a further important assumption that Wittgenstein problematizes.

In contrast with Socrates, Wittgenstein does not assume that what we remind ourselves of, when trying to get clear about what, for example, knowledge is, is a set of characteristics that all particular instances of knowledge share, a

common essence that unifies all genuine cases of knowledge into one unity denoted by the concept. Wittgenstein, in other words, rejects what Socrates seems to accept without any argument, namely, that the unity of concepts (or the unity of the cases that fall under a concept) can always be captured in terms of an overarching definition that determines the scope and bounds of a concept in terms of features common to *all* cases that fall under it. While this assumption of simple conceptual unity, as we can call it, was accepted by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*,⁵ his later philosophy is characterized by its abandonment *qua* assumption. For it is not that a concept *could not* have this kind of unity. We just cannot assume concepts always do. As he explains in a discussion from 1941, making the point with reference to the notion of meaning (rather than concept): "When I wrote [the *Tractatus*], I had Plato's idea of finding the general idea lying behind all particular meanings of a word. Now I think of the meanings as like the fibres of a rope. One may run the whole way through, but none may" (PPO 387). Thus, according to Wittgenstein, there need be no common meaning or underlying idea that unifies all cases of the use of a word to express a particular concept. It is not part of the concept of a concept that conceptual unity depends on something shared by all cases that fall under it. Other modes of conceptual unity, such as family resemblance, are possible (PI §§65–68). Consequently, *pace* Socrates, simple conceptual unity cannot be assumed as the basis of a philosophical methodology. (Another example of non-simple conceptual unity is discussed in section 3.)

Referring again to Socrates, Wittgenstein identifies this assumption regarding the unity of concepts or meaning as a key reason why philosophy has failed to achieve any results. A dictation to students in the early to mid-1930s explains:

The idea that in order to get clear about the meaning of a general term one had to find the common element in all its applications has shackled philosophical investigation; for it has not only led to no result, but also made the philosopher dismiss as irrelevant the concrete cases, which alone could have helped him to understand the usage of the general term. When Socrates asks the question, "what is knowledge?" he does not even regard it as a *preliminary* answer to enumerate cases of knowledge.

BB 20

5 The *Tractatus*' account of logic assumes a common essence shared by every possible proposition (TLP 4.5).

This clarifies Wittgenstein's interest in particular cases. Insofar as simple conceptual unity is not assumed, it becomes a genuine possibility that cases falling under a concept might exhibit variety that cannot be captured in terms of a definition in terms of common features. But if so, we need to look at the particular cases and how they relate to one another in order to characterize a concept and its unity. This is why we should not "dismiss" particular or "concrete cases."

The same basic point is made in the *Investigations*, albeit in different terms, and with a qualification that can be read as a nod in the direction of Socrates: "One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to *look at* its use and learn from that. / But the difficulty is to remove the prejudice which stands in the way of doing so. It is not a *stupid* prejudice' (PI §340). The last qualification is important, bringing us back to the questions raised earlier. For even if Wittgenstein is right that Socrates' assumption of simple conceptual unity is a prejudice, rather than essential to concepts, this does not yet answer all earlier questions. Answers to those questions explain why the prejudice that prevents us from looking at actual uses cannot be dismissed as stupid. Thus, importantly, even if Wittgenstein's point about conceptual unity is granted, we can still ask whether his approach reduces philosophy to empirical observation, how enumerations of particular cases can help philosophically, and whether this compromises philosophy's ideals of precision and clarity. Here I presume that part of Socrates' motivation for searching for overarching definitions is that this allows us to penetrate the complexity and messiness of actual cases, and while what is simple can be understood clearly, what is complex and messy is harder or impossible to understand. Insofar as Wittgenstein promotes turning to empirically given particular cases, can this aspiration for clarity be maintained?

In fact the key elements of Wittgenstein's answers to these questions are already present in the earlier long quotation from the *Voices*. Before going into that, however, let me quote once more from Wittgenstein's dictations. This explains the seriousness of the problem that he thinks arises for Socrates, as well as further clarifying his alternative solution.

Take another example: Socrates' question "What is knowledge?"

Here the case is even clearer [than in Wittgenstein's previous example of Augustine on time], as the discussion begins with the pupil giving an example of an exact definition, and then analogous to this a definition of the word "knowledge" is asked for. As the problem is put, it seems that there is something wrong with the ordinary use of the word "knowledge." It appears we don't know what it means, and that therefore, perhaps, we

have no right to use it. We should reply: "There is no one exact usage of the word 'knowledge'; but we can make up several such usages, which will more or less agree with the ways the word is actually used."

BB 27

Wittgenstein's description of the situation, I assume, is familiar enough for the readers of Plato, despite Wittgenstein's characterizing it as a problem about language. Over again Socrates appears to conclude from failed attempts to find an overarching definition that those engaged in the discussion, himself included, lack knowledge of what is at stake, however unlikely and counterintuitive this conclusion might seem. For instance, he concludes that Laches does not know what courage is, despite the general having faced many situations where a person acts courageously or lacks courage (*Lach.* 200e–201b). But are we, or is Socrates, really justified to say that Laches does not know what courage is (cf. Ms133, 188/CV 64)? If the assumption of simple conceptual unity cannot be taken for granted, more than the interlocutors' failure to find a definition is needed to establish the conclusion. One also needs to show that the concept of courage possesses simple conceptual unity, which Socrates does not try to do. His inference therefore contains a logical gap, and it is not the right of the discussants to use the concept that is problematic, but Socrates' conclusion that they do not know what courage is.

Certain key elements of Wittgenstein's proposed alternative are stated in his reply in the final sentence of the last quote: that we can "make up" exact usages which "more or less agree" with "the ways the word is actually used." The same or intimately related point is made in the earlier quotation from the *Voices* that we might "for our purposes" "juxtapose" a blurred concept with a "sharply bounded concept," and sometimes "even replace the one with the other." The example there of a sharply bounded concept is Wittgenstein's own notion of language as a game according to rules, of which he says that, although it would be false to assert that language is such a game, we can "compare the phenomena of language with such a game, and the one is more or less similar to the other" (VW 33–35). Wittgenstein's methodological suggestion, which then also explains the non-empirical character of philosophical statements, as he conceives them, and how exact definitions and sharply bound concepts can be used in philosophy to clarify changing and/or blurred reality, can now be outlined as follows.⁶

What Wittgenstein describes in the preceding quotations as exact usages and sharply bound concepts are examples of what the *Investigations* calls

⁶ For justification of this interpretation, see Kuusela 2008, 2013, and 2019.

“philosophical models.”⁷ Such models are to be used, as the *Voices* also explains, to make comparisons. More specifically, as Wittgenstein sets out in the *Investigations*, critical of the philosophical tradition including his early work, such a model is to be presented “[...] as what it is, as an object of comparison—as a sort of yardstick; not as a preconception to which reality *must* correspond” (PI §131). A philosophical model in Wittgenstein’s sense constitutes a mode of representing an object of investigation (like a yardstick constitutes a mode of representing the lengths of objects). For instance, a precisely defined, sharply bound concept can be employed as a mode of representing certain aspects or specific features of a more complex object of investigation, such as a natural language concept—for example, knowledge or courage—or cases that fall under such a concept, but without claiming that the object of investigation really conforms to the definition or the sharply bound concept. Rather, a Wittgensteinian model functions as a *clarificatory device*, an instrument in light of which actual uses and cases can be examined *without claiming* that it captures everything essential to them. Instead, the model provides a way of conceiving and conceptualizing the objects of investigation. It offers something clearly articulated and simpler than reality that enables us to perceive complex and messy empirical reality in an orderly way, thus helping to render comprehensible the objects of investigation (PI §§130–131).

It is also important that the model is not intended to clarify reality only by way of its similarity with the objects of study. It is employed to clarify both the similarities and differences of actual cases with and from the model (and thus also similarities and difference between actual cases), and to establish in this way an order among the objects of investigation. However, such an order is not claimed to be definitive or to constitute *the* true metaphysical order of things. It is problem-relative in that, while it might be important to clarify and emphasize certain features of the objects of investigation in order to resolve certain philosophical problems relating to them, other features might be important in connection with other problems. In short, what requires clarification depends on what exactly is the problem. Wittgenstein thus rejects the assumption that there would be an abstract criterion of completeness for philosophical accounts on the basis of which we could say that the account provides us with a solution to every possible philosophical problem that might

7 In his later philosophy Wittgenstein introduces a variety of such models, including so-called grammatical rules (for example, “meaning is use”; PI §43), simple language-games (PI §§1–5), and what may be called “natural historical pictures” (PI §244). For discussion, see Kuusela 2019, ch. 5 and 6.

arise about an object of study, as if we could determine in advance the class of all possible problems relating to the object, and say on this basis that the account contains *everything essential*.⁸ Rather, a philosophical account is complete when our actual problems with the matter at hand have been resolved (PI §133; Kuusela 2008, 65–66, 86–95). The last consideration regarding completeness, just as the point about conceptual unity, constitutes an important aspect of Wittgenstein's rejection of conclusive philosophical theses.

Wittgensteinian models might therefore simplify and idealize, as exemplified by the method of using a sharply bound concept to clarify aspects of a more complex blurry concept. Accordingly, his view is not that, in order to resolve philosophical problems relating to an object of investigation, one must describe the object in all its complexity and blurredness, which would bring into question the capacity of philosophy to reach exactness and precision. Rather, only features that are relevant—essential or important—from the point of view of the problems at hand need to be accounted for. Hence, simplification and idealization are possible in philosophy, and exact concepts can be employed to clarify aspects of blurred reality (Ms140, 33/PG 77). Nevertheless, it is crucial that when a simplified or idealized description or definition is given, for Wittgenstein this does not involve any claim about the simplicity or ideality of the object of study itself. As I will explain in section 3, a fundamental difference between Wittgenstein and Platonism comes to view here. But before going into this, let me clarify the non-empirical character of Wittgensteinian philosophical statements.

A key characteristic of Wittgenstein's grammatical statements, that is, of clarificatory rules such as “language is a game according to rules,” and statements about essences which he regards as grammatical statements, is their non-temporality. Similarly, non-temporality characterizes of the statements of mathematics and geometry (PI §§370–372; Ms117, 25/Ms118, 18r; Ts221, 156–157; RFM I §102; Ms118, 23v/Ts221, 161/RFM I §§103–104). This means that in distinction from empirical, factual statements which, according to Wittgenstein, involve a reference to a time and place (or to times and places), statements about essences involve no such reference. Accordingly, as traditionally maintained, statements of essence are universal, true of relevant objects always and everywhere, without any restrictions or exceptions. Insofar as it is of the essence of, for example, knowledge that knowledge is

8 In the *Voices* and in 1930–32 Wittgenstein still assumed an abstract account of the completeness of philosophical accounts or, in his own terms, a completed grammar for the use of a word that explains its all possible uses. He comes to reject this view by 1932–33 (VW 483; AWL 21; Ts220 §114/Z §440; cf. Ms142 §132 and Ms115, 50–52).

true justified belief, this holds without exceptions of every possible instance of knowledge, rather than merely of some historically and geographically determined set. Correspondingly, that twice fifty is one hundred and triangles have exactly three angles are not truths that involve a reference to any time or place, and therefore to any particular case. This accounts for their universality or exceptionless generality.

In a manuscript from the beginning of the 1930s Wittgenstein explains the distinction between grammatical rules and empirical statements in terms of this distinction between temporal and non-temporal statements:

What I call a “rule” is not meant to entail anything about any determinate (or also indeterminate) time or place of use, and not to refer to any determinate (or indeterminate) persons; but to be merely an instrument of representation.

We say now: “We use the words ‘red’ and ‘green’ in such a way that it counts as senseless (is contradictory) to say that there is red and green in the same place at the same time.” And this is naturally a proposition, an empirical statement about our actual language.

Ms113, 29v/Ts212, 716/Ts213, 246r

Grammatical rules constitute instruments of representation, as exemplified by the rule “language is a game according to rules” which spells out a particular way of regarding (describing, representing) language, namely, as used according to rules. In the capacity of non-temporal universal statements, however, grammatical rules do not claim anything about actual empirical phenomena, for instance, actual human languages. (As the *Voices*-quote notes, to claim that language is a game according to rules would be to assert something false.) This brings us back to the notion of comparison and philosophical models as objects of comparison. For it is by comparing actual language use or actual phenomena with the model that the model is brought into contact with actual language use and reality. When used in this capacity, however, the model does not constitute a philosophical thesis about a necessity in reality (for example, that languages are necessarily rule-governed). Hence, even though universality is indeed a formal characteristic of Wittgensteinian philosophical models, which express no restrictions to their generality, exceptions and deviations can be taken into account when employing such models as objects of comparison. Here we are to take into account both the similarities and differences between the model and the objects of clarification.

We are finally in a position to see how Wittgensteinian philosophical statements differ from empirical statements. Firstly, philosophical statements

are non-temporal. Secondly, although there may be alternatives to a philosophical model, as exemplified by the possibility of employing different rules to describe the use of a word, the existence of such alternatives does not require us to choose between different models, identifying only one of them as correct. Grammatical rules, unlike empirical statements, do not have false opposites (PI §251). This point is connected with the earlier one regarding the problem-relativity of philosophical clarifications that while resolving a certain problem may require focusing on certain features of an object of investigation, resolving other problems may require focusing on other features. This problem-relativity means that two different philosophical descriptions of the same phenomenon might be regarded as true or correct in their respective contexts, even though the descriptions would be incompatible considered in the abstract, and if taken to assert an empirical, factual truth. Evidently, the correctness of empirical statements is not relative to anyone's confusions in this way, and construing Wittgensteinian philosophical statements as empirical would lead to absurdity. This indicates a third difference between empirical and philosophical statements (as well as revealing a difference between grammatical statements and mathematical ones). While the justification of an empirical statement depends on whether things are as it represents, the justification of a Wittgensteinian philosophical statement depends on its capacity to resolve philosophical problems. This, however, consists in its capacity to clarify conceptual relations rather than to establish facts. Philosophical problems are not resolved through discoveries, but by arranging what we already know so as to be able to make sense of relevant facts. (PI §109)

We can therefore conclude that, even though in Wittgenstein's view the phenomena targeted for philosophical clarification are empirical—for instance, the multiplicity of the uses of a word is an empirical phenomenon (Ms152, 193–194)—philosophical statements are not empirical statements (cf. PI §242). Herewith all the earlier questions have been answered, relating to Wittgenstein's concern with particular cases rather than concepts abstractly conceived. Although he regards particular cases as giving us a clue to the clarification of concepts, this does not make philosophy an empirical discipline. Neither does his occupation with the actual messy and blurred cases mean that philosophy cannot be precise, and that simple and precise definitions, such as the Socratic ones, cannot play part in philosophy, it being doomed to describe reality in its actual messy manifoldness. Before discussing more closely the similarities between Wittgenstein's and Socrates' approaches, however, let me explain the sense in which Wittgenstein's philosophy constitutes a rejection of Platonism and what might be called "substance-attribute metaphysics."

This further clarifies the role of ideal notions in philosophy and Wittgenstein's rejection of the assumption of simple conceptual unity.

3 Wittgenstein's Rejection of Platonism and Subject-Attribute Metaphysics

Wittgenstein's approach can be further elucidated by contrasting it with Platonism (even if neither Socrates nor Plato were "Platonists"). By Platonism I understand the view characterized by its postulation of abstract ideal entities—forms or ideas—as the object of philosophical knowledge and statements. A definition of knowledge, for example, would be understood as concerning the form of knowledge, rather than actual empirical cases, or as concerning empirical cases only indirectly in that our comprehension of them as instances of knowledge would presuppose a grasp of the form. Forms in turn are conceived as ideal and abstract in that they are independent of, and comprehensible independently from, empirical phenomena. While everything in the empirical world is subject to change, and exceptions from empirical generalities are always possible, forms are not subject to change and do not allow for exceptions among cases that they characterize. Accordingly, Platonism accounts for the universality of philosophical statements, and their difference from empirical statements, by explaining philosophical statements as concerning the eternal and immutable forms rather than empirical phenomena.

The difference of Wittgenstein's approach from Platonism can now be explained by saying that from Wittgenstein's point of view, Platonism involves a confusion regarding the employment of ideal notions. Instead of explaining the universality and non-empirical character of philosophical statements in terms of philosophers' *use* of them, Platonism explains the matter in an ontologically burdensome way by postulating ideal abstract entities as the object of philosophical statements. Thus, it explains the peculiar features of philosophical statements by postulating even more peculiar objects, fundamentally different from anything in the empirical world.

Wittgenstein comments on Platonism: "Perhaps the Platonic forms are false idealizations. / If there is such a thing, then the person who idealizes falsely must speak nonsense—because he uses a mode of speaking which is valid in one language-game in another one to which it doesn't belong" (Ms169, 79v/LW II, 48). Although this remark is tentative, the same confusion regarding idealization and ideal notions is discussed in the *Investigations*. The difference is only that there it is discussed with reference to the *Tractatus*' postulation of

logically simple names and elementary propositions that underlie the surface of language and which, unlike our ordinary forms of expression, are governed by clear and precise rules, consequently meeting the standards of simplicity and exactness of logic. These underlying linguistic structures are then ideal in the sense that, similarly to Platonic forms, they are free from the ambiguity, blurredness, and variation of empirical phenomena and historical languages. Wittgenstein writes about his postulation of such structures: "[...]—But I want to say: we misunderstand the role played by the ideal in our language. [...]" (PI §100). "We want to say that there can't be any vagueness in logic. The idea now absorbs us that the ideal '*must*' be found in reality. At the same time, one doesn't as yet see *how* it occurs there and doesn't understand the nature of this '*must*.' We think the ideal must be in reality; for we think we already see it there" (PI §101).

According to Wittgenstein, the *Tractatus* was wrong that such ideal structures would have to be found in reality, and that their postulation as actually existing is required for the standards of rigor of logic (exactness and simplicity) to be satisfied. According to his later view, rather than concerned with something ideal that exists in reality, logicians are better understood as using ideal modes of expression and representation, such as logical calculi, to speak about something non-ideal, according to their standards of rigor. And even though such idealizations might not represent non-ideal things exactly as they are—but in a simplified and idealized manner—idealizations are nevertheless possible and legitimate, insofar as they capture whatever is relevant or essential with regard to the particular philosophical problems at hand. The later Wittgenstein thus urges us to recognize ideal notions for what they are. They are special modes of representation, instruments that a logician or philosopher may use in order to achieve exactness, simplicity, and generality (in the sense of abstraction), when this is required. Such ideal notions, however, are not to be reified and projected onto reality in the sense of the postulation of actually extant ideal entities. Herein then lies the confusion of language-games of which Wittgenstein speaks (see Ms157a, 67r–v; Ms157b, 2v–3r; PI §108; Kuusela 2013 and forthcoming). Like a yardstick, an ideal notion is something we keep fixed and clear, and which we do not allow to vary together with reality, in order to ignore irrelevant and distracting variation. But this is no basis for thinking that the ideal notions we employ stand for ideal entities or structures.

Similarly to the early Wittgenstein's postulation of ideal linguistic structures, Platonism postulates ideal objects as the object of philosophical statements and knowledge. Thus, what could be explained more simply with reference to philosophers' peculiar non-temporal use of their statements is explained

by Platonism in terms of the peculiar characteristics of the objects allegedly spoken of, their non-temporality or immutability. We might therefore say that Platonism fails to recognize the distinctive way in which philosophers employ their statements, trying to fit these statements into the category of factual statements about reality. Or to the extent that Platonism recognizes the distinctness of philosophical statements, it explains this by postulating as their object entities outside the empirical realm. However, Wittgenstein's simpler alternative explanation that what philosophers describe is not subject to empirical variation, change and exceptions, because their descriptions do not involve a reference to time and place—there being therefore no foothold for such variation—seems perfectly adequate and satisfactory. This explanation may appear less thrilling than the Platonist one which promises access to eternal truths and partial divinity. But Wittgenstein's proposal has philosophical advantages. If it is accepted, any need to postulate a realm of immutable essences or forms disappears, whereby we are released from the well-known ontological and epistemological problems with Platonism.

Turning now to Wittgenstein's rejection of what may be described as substance-attribute metaphysics, as noted, Wittgenstein rejects Socrates' assumption of simple conceptual unity with a concise argument: provided that simple unity is not the only possible mode of conceptual unity, concepts cannot be assumed to conform to it. Here it is notable that besides family resemblance, Wittgenstein also discusses other non-simple modes of conceptual unity. With regard to his reception of Socrates, his discussion of the concepts of the beautiful and good seem particularly interesting, as he draws here an explicit contrast with Plato, and these examples are clearly intended to undermine the conception of beauty or goodness as something with simple unity. Now, by subject-predicate metaphysics I understand the conception according to which reality consists of two kinds of elements, qualities and substances, which have stable identities that remain the same across their different combinations. Thus, beauty, for instance, appears as if it were an ingredient of all beautiful things, something present in all of them, and likewise for goodness. As Wittgenstein explains in his lectures: "One of the ways of looking at questions in ethics about good is to think that all things said to be good have something in common, just as there is a tendency to think that all things we call games have something in common. Plato's talk of looking for the essence of things was very like talk of looking for the *ingredients* in a mixture, as though qualities were ingredients of things" (AWL, 31). The view described here is closely related to Platonism in that beauty or goodness, since they do not seem reducible to any empirical characteristics of relevant objects,

may invite an explanation of them as independently existing abstract entities (see *Phd.* 100b–e). Wittgenstein remarks on this:

Here we are dealing with a too primitive conception of language, just as for each substantive, we seek to find an object which it designates or also when one imagines that a property must always be a constituent of an object which has it and hence that an object is a mixture of these properties with others, so that it would make sense to say: How beautiful pure beauty must be if it is separated from all other properties, as it were undiluted!

VW 33/Ms302, 13

Wittgenstein's rejection of subject-attribute metaphysics and the corresponding Aristotelian subject-predicate logic can now be outlined.⁹ While the early Wittgenstein took Frege's and Russell's conceptions of logical analysis in terms of functions and arguments to mark a fundamental difference between their new and Aristotelian logic, the later Wittgenstein is less impressed. With regard to functions with one argument place in particular, this conception seems to amount to the same as thinking of judgments in terms of subjects and predicates. Arguably, the view is problematic, however, because it makes the uses of the expressions of language look more uniform than they are (which is apt to promote confusion), and turns a particular historical characteristic of certain languages (the subject-predicate form) into an essential feature of thought or language (Ms113, 126r). Crucially, subject-predicate logic also carries over into logic certain presuppositions of substance-attribute metaphysics in that it envisages the criteria for the application of names and property-terms on the model of substances and attributes, that is, as possessing a definite identity or essence across their different instantiations. Although such an assumption of stable identity may characterize the use of person-names, as Wittgenstein observes, this is not true of all names, as the notion of family resemblance illustrates (Ms113, 126r–v).

Wittgenstein's account of the logical function of "beautiful" and "good" (in a moral sense) as modificatory provides an example of complex conceptual unity, whereby the attribute is not assumed to have a single definite identity over all instantiations. On this account, rather than indicating the presence

9 Possibly substance-attribute metaphysics is not correctly attributed to either Socrates of Plato, but rather Aristotle. Even so, the contrast can still clarify Wittgenstein's relation to the philosophical tradition originating with Socrates.

of a certain quality across all cases, the function of the word “beautiful” is to modify the objects to which it is applied, but without necessarily doing so in exactly the same way in all cases. Examples are a beautiful face, a landscape, a flower, a song, whereby the nonsensical character of comparisons such as “your face is more beautiful than this landscape” or “this song is more beautiful than that flower” indicates that the word is not used with exactly the same meaning in the different cases. The use of “good” can be understood similarly, for example, as modifying different actions in slightly different ways. Thus, perhaps the goodness of a courageous action is not exactly the same as that of a generous one. Furthermore, this view also enables us to say that the goodness of character and an action need not be understood in the same way. Hence, perhaps there is no single form of goodness or beauty.¹⁰ However that may be, Wittgenstein regards simplistic assumptions about conceptual unity and essence as having caused serious harm to philosophy, as the following explains:

The mistake we are up against here is one of the most fundamental ones in the whole of philosophy, and one might exhaust oneself in giving examples in order to highlight the real depth of this error. One asks: What is the sense of a proposition? What is the essence of knowledge? [...] What is the essence of truth? What is the essence of thinking? What does necessity consist in? What is the essence of a question? One populates the world with ethereal essences, namely with things that one thinks one sees behind substantives. The science of these pseudo-beings might justly be called metaphysics.

VW 485; cf. 481, 483, 487

As is evident, Wittgenstein is quite well aware that his later approach brings into question some of the most deep-seated assumptions of the Western philosophical tradition following on from Socrates. Accordingly, in developing his methodology Wittgenstein seeks to overcome the very language employed

10 According to Rowett, Plato postulates forms in order explain the unity of cases sharing an essence *because* Socrates fails to find definitions that would explain unity. From this point of view Plato can then explain differences between instances of beauty with reference to its different “materializations” in the empirical world. Beauty itself therefore does not vary, only empirical things, and Plato seems to have an interesting response to Wittgenstein, unaffected by the problem of finding definitions. As there is no space to discuss this issue here, I will only note that even if it would not be possible to decide directly which account of the variations of beauty is preferable, this might still be decidable indirectly in terms of the overall benefits of each account of conceptual unity. For Rowett’s interpretation of Plato, see Rowett 2018.

by this tradition that embodies its assumptions, namely, the idea that judgments have a subject-predicate form (or are analyzable in such terms), and the subject-attribute metaphysics which this language invites. In so doing he then opens up new possibilities for philosophical thought, seeking to liberate philosophy from the assumptions by which it has been captivated. His own experience of philosophizing under the constraints of these assumptions is explained with reference to Socrates in the following remark from 1937:

In the course of our conversations Russell would often exclaim: "Logic's hell!"—And this *fully* expresses what we experienced while thinking about the problems of logic; namely their immense difficulty. Their hardness—their hard & *slippery* texture.

The primary ground of this experience, I think, was this fact: that each new phenomenon of language that we might retrospectively think of could show our earlier explanation to be unworkable. But that is the difficulty Socrates gets caught up in when he tries to give the definition of a concept. Again and again an application of the word emerges that seems not to be compatible with the concept to which other applications have led us. We say: but that *isn't* how it is!—it *is* like that though!—& all we can do is keep repeating these antitheses.

Ms119, 59–60/CV 35; cf. PI §112

This explains the sense in which the later Wittgenstein is making things easier. As noted, the point is not to replace rigorous philosophical analyses with the enumeration and description of empirical cases. Nevertheless, with the rejection of the assumption that there should be a common essence shared by every relevant case, and that philosophy's task is to formulate exceptionless theses about such essences, and when instead philosophers' theses and definitions of essences are reinterpreted as Wittgensteinian clarificatory devices, philosophy does seem to become easier. It is no longer faced by the task that Socrates almost always finds himself defeated by, the abstract definition of essences. Instead Wittgenstein contextualizes the question "what is essential in X" so that it is relative to particular problems, and thus becomes answerable.

But in fact the accuracy of the 1930s characterization that Wittgenstein is making philosophy easier might be questioned. If it is ultimately impossible for philosophy to reach agreed upon results when practiced in the Socratic way, is it really correct to say that Wittgenstein makes philosophy easier? If something is an impossible way to do something, then another way to achieve the same or closely related goal is not merely easier. Rather, the first is not a way to achieve the goal at all, like alchemy is not chemistry, even if it might

importantly foreshadow chemistry. (Cf. Wittgenstein's comparison of his approach with chemistry as opposed to alchemy in his lectures 1930–33; Moore 1955, 26.) This might then explain Wittgenstein's self-description in the 1930s as having found another discipline that would not be exactly like philosophy, but its heir, even though this new discipline might be called "philosophy" by extension. As he says: "Why do I wish to call our present activity philosophy, when we also call Plato's activity philosophy? Perhaps because of a certain analogy between them, or perhaps because of the continuous development of the subject. Or the new activity may take the place of the old because it removes mental discomforts the old was supposed to" (AWL 27–28; cf. BB, 63).

Notably, no remarks of this kind are found in the *Philosophical Investigations*, which simply bears the p-word in its title without any explanation or excuse. My thesis is that ultimately Wittgenstein came to realize that Socratic definitions can quite readily be reinterpreted in accordance with his own account of the function of philosophical statements as clarificatory devices. From this point of view Socrates' activity might then be regarded as a clumsier and less self-aware way to do what Wittgenstein has found a better way to do, but not as a different discipline. Accordingly, Wittgenstein is giving a new twist to philosophy, rather than inventing a new discipline. By contrast, if a commitment to the assumption regarding immutable common essences is considered as essential to Socrates (or Plato), we might say that his is a different discipline, and Wittgenstein invented a new one. To elucidate the suggestion that Wittgenstein gives a new twist to Socratic philosophy, let us discuss Socrates' philosophical practice, as described in the Platonic dialogues, in the light of Wittgenstein's method.

4 Socrates' Philosophical Practice from Wittgenstein's Perspective

Platonic dialogues characteristically describe Socrates as questioning others and searching with them for definitions intended to answer questions of the form "What is X?" Equally characteristically, Socrates expects such a definition to be given in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions for something being an X. As Wittgenstein observes, however, Socrates' aim of spelling out an overarching definition seems to make it impossible for him to recognize any value in partial explanations, that is, definitions that capture some but not all instances of Xs, or capture some essential aspects of Xs but not everything that might be considered essential across possible contexts of discussion. Partial explanations now appear as failed attempts at definition or as mere empirical descriptions. This rejection of the value of partial explanation is illustrated by the *Laches*, where Socrates concludes that none of the discussants

knows what courage is, due to their failure to spell out an expected kind of definition (200e–201b). As we have seen, however, Wittgenstein provides us with an argument that Socrates is wrong in his conclusion. It depends on an unexamined assumption regarding conceptual unity that constitutes a gap in Socrates' inference. This point can be generalized over similar cases.

But it does not follow that Socrates' philosophical practice of searching for, examining, making use in the course of discussion, and demonstrating the shortcomings of definitions—what scholars have called the “Socratic *elenchus*” broadly construed¹¹—would have to be rejected as valueless by Wittgenstein. Rather, only the conviction that nothing has been achieved unless an ultimate definition is reached ought to be rejected. Accordingly, from the point of view of Wittgenstein's later methodology it is possible to reinterpret Socratic definitions as clarificatory devices whose capacity to contribute to our understanding does not depend on whether they capture all cases falling under a concept. This reinterpretation then makes it possible to acknowledge partial explanations or definitions as philosophically significant.

From the point of view of Wittgenstein's later method we can say that partial definitions have at least the following five important functions in philosophy. Employed in these ways definitions can be regarded as making an important contribution to the goals as well as the rigor (precision and clarity) of philosophical discussion. Four of these ways of using definitions are present in Socratic dialogues. The last one might be seen as extensions of the Socratic uses of definitions.

1) Defining one's terms makes it possible for one to fix precisely the meaning in which one is using one's terms, and to ascertain that participants in a conversation speak about the same things, or mean the same as oneself. In this capacity definitions can be used to establish a common ground for collaborative philosophical examination such as Socrates proposes. By contrast, if the interlocutors simply tried to describe or characterize X, without first defining what X is or what they understand by X, they might easily and unknowingly end up talking past each other. For example, when Laches and Nicias describe fighting in armor as a good or bad way to develop the virtue of courage, they might each mean something different by “courage.” Their judgments concerning the

11 Discussion in this section is intended to contribute to the discussion of the philosophical point of Socratic *elenchus*, and the purpose of Socratic examination of definitions, *insofar as it is not assumed* that articulating overarching definitions is Socrates' main goal. For discussions of the *elenchus*, see Scott 2002; Greve 2015 discusses certain affinities between Socrates' and Wittgenstein's approaches.

matter could not then be compared, and it would not be right to assume that one of them is right and the other wrong.

2) Defining one's terms and sticking to those definitions enables one to avoid wavering between different meanings of a term in a discussion, and consequently to avoid confusion, fallacious inferences, and other related mistakes of equivocation and ambiguity. Defining one's terms thus brings rigor into a discussion. Again this use of definitions seems central to Socrates' philosophical practice.

3) Definitions make it possible for one to interrogate one's understanding of X, and to work towards a better understanding of X. In this sense it may be of the greatest significance for coming to understand a matter that one begins by trying to articulate a definition, and then examines relevant cases in its light, independently of the definition's ultimate success at capturing all cases. For even if the definition does not capture all cases, it might still help to bring into sharper focus essential features of a subset of them. Moreover, as Wittgenstein emphasizes, it may be very instructive to see how the targeted cases differ from a definition. Differences, of course, are something that a definition that captures only some of the relevant cases can help to bring into focus, as exemplified by Nicias' definition of courage (as knowledge of the fearful and hopeful) that excludes the attribution of courage to animals which Laches, by contrast, regards as universally agreed. Despite its shortcomings, however, Nicias' definition helps to bring into focus a specific aspect of the concept, namely, that courageous action seems to require one to act knowingly. At the same time it raises questions about the notion of knowledge and its relation to instinctual action, due to the exclusion of animals, and that the definition is simultaneously too inclusive, covering all virtue (*La.* 195a–198c). Despite its failure, the definition thus gives us a foothold for addressing important questions about courage.

4) Definitions can be used as stand-in notions, that is, as temporary idealized explications that serve the purpose of particular philosophical discussions. (Cf. Socrates on memory in *Tht.* 191e.) As Wittgenstein points out, it is not the case that features of X that are essential from the point of view of certain philosophical problems relating to X must be essential from the point of view of all philosophical problems relating to X. Accordingly, it may be unproblematic, for the purpose of particular philosophical discussions, to employ a simplified or idealized definition that fits some cases but not all. The definition's not capturing all cases is not a defect here, insofar as it serves well the discussion at hand. For example, the Tractarian account of propositions as true/false representations might be adequate when discussing scientific language use, even though it can hardly illuminate poetry, and is certainly not acceptable as a general definition of propositions. Similarly, we might ask whether the

so-called Gettier cases really show that the definition of knowledge as justified true belief is wrong or unhelpful in all contexts of philosophical discussion (Gettier 1963). Wittgenstein's account can justify a negative answer, even if we did accept the Gettier cases as counterexamples to the traditional definition of knowledge.

5) Definitions can be used as centers of variation. As Wittgenstein argues, it is possible that there are no essential features shared by all cases falling under a concept, and moreover, that relevant cases merge into each other without clear borders. In such a situation definitions can be used to establish what Wittgenstein calls "centers of variation." This is exemplified by his proposal to employ cases of punishment as revenge, deterrent, and reform as centers of variation in explaining the essence of punishment (MS115, 221–2). The point is that identifying such centers can help one to see how the cases falling under a concept constitute an orderly whole, even if this whole cannot be adequately accounted for in terms of a definition in terms of common features, and even if the borders between different types of cases are not sharp, with mixed cases that exhibit characteristics of more than one center of variation. There seems to be no reason why Socratic definitions could not be employed in this way, even if no examples can be found in Platonic dialogues.

From a Wittgensteinian perspective we might therefore say that the value of Socrates' philosophical discussions, as described in the Platonic dialogues, lies in his having introduced and demonstrated a variety of ways in which definitions can be employed in philosophical inquiry. The dialogues teach us methods of a philosophical examination, of interrogating our own and others' understanding, of finding out whether what we think is right, whether a proposed definition is really what X is, or what we tacitly know X to be. Definitions also enable collaborative research, as well as helping us to keep track of what we are saying and to avoid wavering unnoticed between different meanings. Thus, if instead of focusing on the goal of spelling out overarching definitions we look at how Socrates actually employs definitions, we can recognize these employments as philosophically highly significant quite independently of whether overarching definitions can be reached.

Accordingly, it seems that Socrates' philosophical practice can be understood as consistent with Wittgenstein's methods of the use of clear and precise concepts, grammatical rules, and other philosophical models, provided that Socrates' aim is not assumed to be limited to articulating definitions that capture every possible case. If instead Socrates' method of the employment of definitions is seen as motivated by a search for rigor and clarity, highly interesting similarities with Wittgenstein's approach emerge. This also means that, if in response to Platonic dialogues we simply start copying Socrates,

trying to find exceptionless definitions, we are failing to appreciate his methods of investigation and how they make possible rigorous collaborative research, and guard us against mistakes arising from equivocation. In this case we are using his methods unreflectively. Similarly, to feel disappointed by Socrates' failure to articulate ultimate definitions, and to consider the investigation as a failure for this reason, is to miss his real importance. Certainly it would not seem correct to describe him as a failed philosopher, even though he almost never reaches definitions of the desired kind. This should make us pause to think what the real basis is for our appreciation of him as a philosopher.

In conclusion, the possibility of interpreting Socrates' philosophical approach as largely consistent with Wittgenstein's can explain why the 1930s remarks that emphasize the differences between Wittgenstein and Socrates do not reoccur later, and why they do not make it into the *Investigations*. Rather than opposing the Socratic approach, Wittgenstein can be seen as developing it further and giving it a new twist, as well as extending it with further methods, such as his method of language-games. Finally, as the motto for the *Investigations* says, characteristic of progress is that it looks bigger than it really is. This reminds us that even if Wittgenstein did succeed in making the practice of philosophy easier in the sense explained earlier, it remains very difficult to articulate genuinely helpful clarificatory definitions and accounts, not to speak of inventions such as Socrates' method/s of using definitions. One might therefore say that there is much more common between Socrates and Wittgenstein than might seem at first sight, and seemed to Wittgenstein in the 1930s.¹²

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Leo Strauss' Socrates and the Possibility of Philosophy in Our Time

Dolores Amat

One can easily receive the impression that Plato and Xenophon presented their Socrates in conscious contradiction to Aristophanes' presentation. It is certainly impossible to say whether the Platonic-Xenophontic Socrates owes his being as much to poetry as does the Aristophanean Socrates

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1 Introduction

Political philosophy is the central problem of Leo Strauss' work. Its importance is evident not only in the many studies he published on the history, nature, and potential of political philosophy, but also in the titles of many of his works, such as *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis* (1936a), which was his first work published in English, and *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (1983), his last book, which was published after his death.¹

According to Strauss, modernity has reached what it deems the resounding conclusion that political philosophy is impossible, and that conviction leads to widespread disconcertion, since the majority believes it is not possible to distinguish between the just and the unjust, or between good and evil. This in turn leads to nihilistic relativism,² and to a moral, social, and intellectual crisis: "I had seen that the modern mind had lost its self-confidence or its certainty

1 Heinrich Meier (2007) mentions these two books as examples of the centrality of the notion of political philosophy in Strauss' work.

2 "If our principles have no other support than our blind preference, everything a man is willing to dare will be permissible. The contemporary rejection of natural right leads to nihilism—nay, it is identical with nihilism" (Strauss 1992, 4–5).

of having made decisive progress beyond pre-modern thought; and I saw that it was turning into nihilism, or what is in practice the same thing, fanatical obscurantism" (1936a, xv). To explore and attempt to overcome the crisis of our time, Strauss studies the roots of modern ideas and compares them with the visions in opposition to which modern thought emerged: "I concluded that the case of the moderns against the ancients must be reopened, without any regard to cherished opinions or convictions, *sine ira et studio*" (1936a, xv).

Political philosophy is one of the most important differences between modern and ancient philosophy: according to Strauss' view, classical philosophers, such as Plato and Xenophon, accepted the possibility and necessity of political philosophy; and they considered Socrates to be its founder and its best model. Hence Socrates' uniqueness and centrality in Leo Strauss' view.

In his attempts at understanding the figure of Socrates, Strauss pays particular attention to the dispute between Aristophanes and Plato (which he understands as a dispute between poetry and philosophy).³ While the former offers a mocking portrait of Socrates that discredits philosophy and shows the dangers that it poses to the stability of the city, the latter produces a fictional character designed, according to Strauss, to show the value of philosophy and to prop up citizens' morality and sense of responsibility.⁴

According to Strauss' reading, Socrates' disciples understood—pursuant to Aristophanes' warnings and after the death of Socrates—that the questions posed by philosophy might imperil the certainties that enable life in the *polis*, and from the moment they realized this, they tried to temper their actions and speeches in order not to unsettle the community. In this context, thinkers like Plato reinforced the difference between esoteric and exoteric communication.

3 Although Strauss also takes into account the work of Xenophon, he prioritizes Plato; see Strauss 1996, 165. He in fact takes Plato as a model for developing his own understanding of political philosophy. In his courses on Plato's *Symposium* (2003), he writes: "When we look at the present situation in the world, this side of the Iron Curtain, we see that there are two powers determining present-day thought. I call them positivism and historicism. The defect of these powers today compels us to look out for an alternative. That alternative seems to be supplied by Plato rather than anyone else" (1); and "When we look back ... we see that there is only one great philosopher who somehow seems to have stood for this principle, that the questions are clearer than the answers to the important questions. That man was Plato" (2003, 3). In his Introduction to *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*, Thomas L. Pangle (1983, 2) also considers Platonic political philosophy as Strauss' model: "Each one of Strauss' essays is a study in Platonic political philosophy inasmuch as each is an execution of, a model for, such philosophizing."

4 Strauss suggests this idea on several occasions, though never quite explicitly. See, e.g., Strauss 1980, 3–4 ("the Platonic dialogues 'idealize' Socrates. Plato never vouches for the authenticity of his Socratic conversations") and his six public lectures on the problem of Socrates (Strauss 1996, esp. 164–5).

In this sense, Platonic dialogues are meant to say different things to different people.⁵

Thus, Strauss suggests that an agreement between Aristophanes and the philosophers was reached in which everyone understood the need to protect the city from dangerous speeches. In that sense, the prudent and responsible Socrates that Plato presents would attest to that political agreement.⁶ But the understanding is by no means absolute. For the philosophers, protecting the city was a secondary concern, a means to an end held above politics—the philosophical endeavor (Strauss 1996, 188). Strauss proposes that while Plato accepts the *political* criticism voiced by Aristophanes in his comedies, he rejects the idea—suggested in plays such as *Clouds*—of the impossibility or the futility of philosophy. Plato shows in his dialogues that philosophy is not only possible, but also politically necessary. Moreover, Plato shows philosophy as the best possible way of life (Strauss 1996, 203; 1989a, 258–60).

In that sense, Strauss points out, the dispute around the figure of Socrates evident in the contrasting portraits painted by his contemporaries is only the visible face of a deeper problem: the problem or the question of the value of that which the figure of Socrates represents, the value of philosophy (1980, 6–8). Plato believes in the possible existence of an order that human beings can grasp, and that therefore the best life is the one dedicated to discovering that order. Aristophanes declares knowledge to be impossibly beyond reach. From his poetic perspective, there is no cognizable order, no precise hierarchy; all human activities are of equal value. There is no way out of the cave; there is no cave at all. For that position, philosophy is a futile and threatening enterprise. According to Strauss, modern thinkers like Nietzsche took up this point of view (1980, 6–8) without considering thoroughly the counterarguments that classical philosophy proposed (cf. Rosen 1991).

5 Strauss 1964, 52–4. It is the study of Farabi's work that leads Strauss to identify diverse messages in Plato's work. In the 1930s, he begins to read the classics between the lines and to write using esoteric techniques. Daniel Tanguay calls this crucial point in Strauss' work the "farabian turn" (2003, 149–55). See Strauss 1995 (in German, 1935), 1936b, 1945, 1988. This hermeneutical decision has given rise to much critique and skepticism. Rémi Brague, in "Athens, Jerusalem, Mecca: Leo Strauss's 'Muslim' Understanding of Greek Philosophy" (1998), warns about the difficulties of differentiating an accurate reading from a mistaken. Those difficulties concern not only Strauss's work, but also every interpretation of Strauss's writings, like ours. Strauss was not unaware of those problems and he responds to some of his critics in several texts. See, in particular, "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing" (1954), which leans on the arguments in the articles from *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (1952).

6 "Plato's and Xenophon's Socrates can be understood, *can* be understood as replies to Aristophanes' presentation of Socrates ... He was the philosopher of self-knowledge and therefore of practical wisdom. He was the erotician par excellence" (Strauss 1996, 164–5).

Through the study of the quarrel between Plato and Aristophanes, this chapter will show that Strauss' Socrates is a fictional character produced to put those arguments back into the debate and to suggest the possibility and the value of rehabilitating classical political philosophy for our days. Strauss finds the fundamental features of this fictional character mainly in the work of Plato, which—according to him—intended to praise philosophy and protect it from the attacks of the city. Nevertheless, we shall see that Strauss suggests that the elusive figure of Socrates also reveals the problematic character of philosophy, which cannot demonstrate its merit on rational bases.

2 Aristophanes' Socrates and Leo Strauss' Aristophanes

Strauss remarks on Aristophanes' comedies in several texts, and dedicates an entire book—*Socrates and Aristophanes*—to an exhaustive study of the poet. In that book, Strauss discusses Aristophanes' eleven surviving comedies and attempts to find in them meaning that unmindful readers or audiences might miss. He claims that Aristophanes divided his audience into the wise and simple laughers, with a different message for each (1996, 144; 1980, 23). Thus, in keeping with the advice he gave (in his article on Maimonides: 1988a, 38–94) to those who comment on esoteric texts, he reads and indeed writes between the lines about what is found in Aristophanes' comedies. We find in *Socrates and Aristophanes*, then, many of the esoteric techniques described in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (1988a).⁷

As in most of his texts, in *Socrates and Aristophanes* Strauss plays the part of the commentator, mixing his own reflections with meticulous and apparently neutral or objective descriptions. He explains that the *Clouds* tells the story of Strepsiades, a common citizen who, debt ridden, approaches Socrates' school in order to master the art of rhetoric and thereby get out of paying his creditors. At the school, Strepsiades is welcomed by one of Socrates' disciples, whose speech and general attitude suggest Socrates' dangerous clumsiness. Though it is believed that Socrates' teachings are mysterious and must be kept secret, they are revealed to the first man who says he wants to learn them (Strauss 1980, 14); they are thought to be very deep, but we learn from the disciple that the topics discussed include, for instance, the distance jumped by a flea. Besides, the group “need not leave the tank in order to catch the flea” (Strauss 1989a, 120), which suggests that the philosopher and his students are filthy and hapless. It is after that introduction that Socrates appears, contemplating the

7 For a more detailed description of Strauss' way of reading Aristophanes, see Amat 2016.

sun as he floats in the air in a basket. The teacher comes down at the request of the visitor, asks him what he wants, and calls him “ephemeral” (1980, 15). Indeed, for Socrates Strepsiades and any human affair are equally mundane because ephemeral (1980, 15), Strauss explains, and Aristophanes paints the picture of a philosopher passionate about his work but dangerously indifferent to the city. As the play advances, the teacher’s indifference and ridiculousness grow increasingly perilous: the gods are discredited at his school, and the legitimacy of justice and the holiness of the family are questioned (1989a, 121–2). In the end, Socrates pays the price for his imprudence: Strepsiades, confused by philosophy’s disturbing teachings and frustrated in his attempt to use them to his advantage, repents for his unjust desires and then burns down Socrates’ school.

It is in the middle of this almost literal and seemingly anodyne description of the *Clouds* that Strauss presents some of his own ideas about Socrates.⁸ But he does so in a footnote about Socrates’ non-monetary remuneration, not in the body of the text. As seldom in his work, Strauss declares there in his own name that he agrees with part of an idea, an idea presented by John Burnet and A.E. Taylor:

Proceeding differently than [them], I have come to agree with part of their view of the Aristophanean Socrates. My disagreement with them has two different, although not unrelated, reasons. Burnet and Taylor are concerned with the *Clouds* as a source rather than understanding the play by itself. Above all, their position is what for want of a more convenient term may be called harmonistic. On the historical level that tendency shows itself in Taylor’s assertion that the Aristophanean Socrates is both a physiologist along the lines of Diogenes of Apollonia for instance and a thinker concerned with the royal or political art in the sense of Plato (or Xenophon); he does not pay proper attention to the assertion of Plato’s *Laws* x, according to which failure to grasp the radical difference between soul and, say, air leads to contempt of the political (or royal) art. Burnet and Taylor are unable even to consider the possibility that Platonic (or Xenophontic) Socrates is to some extent a reaction or response to the Aristophanean Socrates.

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8 It is precisely in the center of his description, twenty pages into a forty-page article. This is important because Strauss suggests that what is most important in a text written with esoteric techniques appears frequently in the less conspicuous places, far from the most consulted parts, like the introduction and the conclusions (1988a, 32).

Thus, in a somewhat sinuous way, Strauss suggests the poetic or fictitious character of the portraits offered by Plato and Xenophon. If we remember now that this note was meant to add information about the non-monetary contributions of Socrates' disciples to their teacher, we may understand Plato's dialogues and Xenophon's writings as gifts or retributions to Socrates.⁹ In this manner, Strauss eschews canonical perspectives that tend to read Plato's dialogues as reports without considering their dramatic or artistic side. He also opposes the commonplace view that sees Plato's version of Socrates as more accurate than Aristophanes'. According to Strauss, this view arises from the general prejudice in favor of the tragedy, considered more true and profound than the comedy. Plato, he says, was familiar with this prejudice, which would not be exclusive to modern times, and thus presented the fate of Socrates in a tragic manner (1989a, 141–2). But Strauss does not accept this prejudice, and so he goes on to study Aristophanes' comedies seriously. Unlike (his interpretation of) Burnet and Taylor, he does not take the *Clouds* as a historical source, but as part of the quarrel between poetry and philosophy.

2.1 *Aristophanes' Political Warnings*

Strauss' interpretation of the *Clouds* depends on his interpretation of Aristophanes' overall project. He believes that Aristophanes cares particularly about the relationship between nature and convention. Aristophanes depicts nature as primary reality; it is always heterogeneous and mysterious, never encompassed in its entirety by any law. But he also shows that human nature is always intermingled with norms and conventions. Those two registers—nature and law—are in a constant state of tension; no law is capable of fully circumscribing man's excessive nature. Therefore, Aristophanes' comedies reveal the difficult relationship between *nomos* and *phusis*, and the precariousness of any order.

According to Strauss, Aristophanes' comedies give the readers or the public the opportunity to live out their desire to get around the rules and prohibitions; they also warn philosophers, politicians, and demagogues of the limits in the power of reason and of *nomos* in general to mold nature. A failure to recognize that fact, so Aristophanes' works warn, might imperil not only the city but also the very ones who—like Socrates—participate in that denial. Due to his indifference to human affairs, Socrates fails to capture political reality; he even forgets that his very survival depends on the city. He lacks, therefore, self-knowledge and prudence. He does not grasp the specificity of political

9 The highest aim of Plato's works, asserts Strauss on more than one occasion, is to offer a praise of the figure of Socrates, or of the philosophical way of life (see, e.g., 1996, 204–5).

life, which depends on a delicate balance between law and nature. He casts doubt on the authorities and certainties that channel human impulses in the political community. In this manner, Aristophanes depicts the philosopher as a passionate scholar of nature lacking in *erôs* and inept at human affairs. He does not value the city, does not care about its faulty rules and conventions, and is not moved by the beauty of which it is capable. In trying to transcend anything ephemeral, he shows himself to be anti-erotic, indifferent to the human beauty that poetry celebrates.

As we already said, Strauss explains that Socrates' disciples understood that warning; their works attempted to respond to the poet's claims and to stave off possible harm. Indeed, it was the difficulty of incorporating philosophy into the *polis* harmoniously that led Socrates' disciples to develop political philosophy—the art that apart from pursuing knowledge attempts to grasp the specificity of human affairs in order to deepen its understanding of the whole of which political communities form part, and to further the self-knowledge of philosophers while also defending philosophy from the perils that threaten it (Strauss 1988a).

2.2 *The Value of Socrates' Activity*

But it is not only the political warnings to which the friends of Socrates respond. The problem of Socrates has two terms, according to Strauss: the difficult relationship between the philosopher and the city, and the debatable value of Socrates' activity, philosophy (1980, 6).

Strauss describes the second term in his introduction to *Socrates and Aristophanes*, where, in addition to mentioning some of the main classical sources on Socrates, he refers to Thucydides, to some ancient poets, and to a single modern philosopher, Nietzsche.¹⁰ "The problem of Socrates as we have sketched it, which includes that of the young Socrates, can only be preparatory to 'the problem of Socrates' as stated by Nietzsche: The question of what Socrates stood for inevitably becomes the question of the worth of what Socrates stood for." From Strauss' perspective, "the return to the origins of the Great Tradition has become necessary because of the radical questioning of that tradition, a questioning that may be said to culminate in Nietzsche's attack on Socrates or on Plato" (Strauss 1980, 6).¹¹

10 "Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*" (1973) is the only article by Strauss entirely dedicated to Nietzsche; Nietzsche is briefly mentioned in several other works; see generally Lampert 1996.

11 In this manner, Strauss shows that his return to antiquity has its roots in modern problems and that his interest in classical authors is not merely historical, but fundamentally philosophical (see, e.g., Strauss 1978, 1).

Nietzsche considers Socrates to be the single turning point of world history that leads, over the centuries, to modern decadence.¹² Socrates is the first theoretical man; he rejects and destroys the principles of the tragic understanding of life; and he calls into question the values that gave birth to the highest that humanity could reach: Greek tragedy (Strauss 1980, 6). "In the person of Socrates the belief in the comprehensibility of nature and in the universal healing power of knowledge has first come to light" (Strauss 1980, 6). He points out that the author of *Beyond Good and Evil* observes in the problem of Socrates the struggle of poetic and philosophical principles and calls attention to the (supposedly) disastrous results of the triumph of Socratic or philosophical understanding.

According to Strauss' interpretation of Nietzsche, the ultimate consequences of Socrates' influence in Western culture appear in the modern belief in universal enlightenment, but the limitations of science have shaken "Socratic culture" forever (1980, 7). This opens the door to nihilism, but also to hope: "there is the hope for ... a philosophy of the future that is no longer merely theoretical, but knowingly based on acts of the will or on decisions" (1980, 7).

Although Nietzsche uses some elements of the *Clouds* to censure Socrates, Strauss points out that his attack is not against the Aristophanean character, but against the responsible citizen portrayed by Plato. This makes sense, Strauss suggests, because the "Platonic Socrates is as remote from the Marathon fighters as is Aristophanes' Socrates" (1980, 8). That is to say, even though the Platonic Socrates seeks to protect justice and the stability of the city, he appeals to new principles to do so and thus corrodes the ancestral values based on the highest poetry. In attacking Plato's Socrates, then, Nietzsche participates in the dispute between poetry and philosophy and seeks to undermine the elements that support philosophical superiority.

However, in suggesting that the figure presented by Plato is a fictitious character who intends to counter the Aristophanes' version of Socrates, Strauss points out that Nietzsche's attack is not directed against the true objective, but against a decoy. Nietzsche attacks the exoteric Socrates, the fictional character created by Plato to praise and defend philosophy, not the true philosopher, who according to Strauss resembles the philosopher of the future much more than Nietzsche seems to have noticed.¹³ But unlike Nietzsche, who presents

12 For further discussion and evaluation, see Raymond (in this volume).

13 Strauss 1989a, 11. The exact meaning of this suggestion, which seems to imply a great coincidence between Strauss' interpretation of Platonic philosophy and the Nietzschean project, is not clear. In fact, the various possible interpretations of the nature and scope of that coincidence give place to very different understandings of Strauss's work. Our point of view concerning this debate will become clear throughout the paper.

his philosopher noisily, Plato merely insinuates his salient features. And this difference of form, Strauss suggests, reveals a difference of content: it exhibits a fundamental difference in the understanding of nature in general and of political affairs in particular.

According to Strauss, Nietzsche's view leans on the modern understanding of *physis*, which is supposed to be malleable by human power,¹⁴ and this explains his politically revolutionary ideas.¹⁵ Besides, Nietzsche denies the possibility of access to real knowledge; he asserts the incapacity of human beings to rise above particular interpretations of nature. Philosophers have tried to access the text as something different from interpretations, but Strauss explains that Nietzsche affirms that he has discovered that the text in its pure form is inaccessible. In this way, Nietzsche proclaims that philosophizing in its peak does not consist in contemplation or in a search of truth, but in creation, in prescribing laws to nature (Strauss 1983, 177; 1989a, 13–26). Like Aristophanes, Nietzsche asserts the futile character of the classical philosophical search.

Yet Nietzsche's statements lead to some questions that Strauss poses in various ways (1983; 1989a) and that can be summarized as follows: What is the status of Nietzsche's discovery (the discovery that reveals that nothing is a discovery)? Is it not a philosophical discovery? In posing these questions, Strauss points out the problems of Nietzsche's position, the vicissitudes of the poetic point of view, or the difficulties in maintaining the rejection of philosophy with consistency. His intention is not, however, to discard Nietzsche's or the poetic alternative, but to show that it is based on problematic premises (1983, 176–7). In this sense, Strauss points out in his work the problematic bases of every answer in order to highlight the questions. Barring a full grasp of everything, no approach is certain or indisputable. All solutions, then, are questionable (1989a, 260). As a result, Strauss suggests that the only possible pillars of a reasonable life are questions, and, according to his view, that is precisely what guides philosophers like Socrates (1989a, 354–355). The affirmation of the impossibility of knowledge is dogmatic insofar as it entails an uncritical acceptance of a response to one of the fundamental questions posed by human life. The question about the possibility of knowledge, which refers to the goodness of philosophical activity and which is involved in the quarrel between poetry and philosophy, is an enigma whose difficulty is much more evident than its possible solutions. It is with the intention of studying

14 Strauss comments on the modern understanding of nature in various occasions, e.g., in "The Three Ways of Modernity" (1989b).

15 In this sense, unlike Plato, Nietzsche would not accept Aristophanes' calls for prudence.

this question that Strauss proposes to return to the comedies of Aristophanes and the dialogues of Plato.

3 Platonic Political Philosophy according to Leo Strauss

Strauss asserts, despite what modern readers would seem to believe, that it is not possible to know for sure what Plato thought of the topics addressed in his dialogues.¹⁶ The dialogues are plays, with characters, plots, and so forth. They must not be read as reports on theoretical doctrines, but rather as works of art. While those works contain speeches, many of them are contradictory and they are always attributed to certain characters. It would be as absurd, Strauss asserts, to consider the statements of the individuals that appear in Plato's dialogues expressions of his thinking as it would be to say that the characters in Shakespeare's plays express that author's points of view (1996, 179).

Furthermore, Strauss observes, Plato points out the limitations of written speech on more than one occasion; written speech can be read by anyone and, unlike a speech delivered by an orator, it cannot be adapted to its audience.¹⁷ It is reasonable to assume, then, that Plato's dialogues were constructed such that the flexibility of oral language would remain intact. It can also be assumed, Strauss goes on, that in these works different things are said to different individuals (1978, 52–3). If, as Plato's Second Letter suggests, not all men are capable of understanding all ideas or questions, writings containing certain messages should not address those who might be disturbed by them. For them, Plato's dialogues hold beneficial opinions, whereas for those who are apt for the exercise of deep thought that philosophy proposes, Plato's dialogues point to or insinuate fruitful paths of reflection (1978, 53–4).

Strauss suggests, then, that Plato's works are to be read as complex mazes to be explored with care and patience. He advises, among other things, heeding the dialogues' plots and settings, everything that is not at the center of the speeches. And the quantity and variety of Plato's works sheds light on the whole: there are different types of dialogues and each one is characterized less by theme than by approach to theme (1996, 180–2).

On those grounds, Strauss asserts that Plato's work as a whole can be understood, among other things, as a response to Aristophanes' attacks on

16 Strauss's reading of Plato can be found in several texts written over many years; for a complete list, see Amat 2015.

17 Strauss refers to both Plato's *Second Letter* and *Phaedrus* (see 1978, 52–3).

Socrates. Strauss points to two pieces in particular that attempt to rebut the poet: the *Republic* and *Symposium*.

3.1 *The Republic*

The *Republic* is, of course, a dialogue between Socrates and a group of young people on the problem of justice. Over the course of the dialogue, Socrates founds, discursively, the perfect city. Thrasymachus, the rhetorician, is Socrates' adversary (Strauss 1996, 183). He argues that what is just is the same as what is legal, and that what is legal depends on the decision of the one governing, which means that what is just is the same as the will of the strongest. In that sense, Strauss points out, Thrasymachus, in Plato's dialogue, plays the role that Unjust Speech plays in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, denying anything lofty and venerated and affirming the law of nature in the most basic sense. Socrates, who in Aristophanes' comedy was guilty of revealing the weakness of justice, represents Just Speech in Plato. But the way he defends justice is not traditional or mythological, but entirely novel: since ancestral truths have proven problematic, Socrates attempts to establish a notion of justice outside beliefs and conventions (1996, 183–4). He pursues that which is intrinsically just, or just by nature. Justice, thus, is seen as the territory of philosophers, scholars of nature par excellence.

What Socrates pursues, then, is a social order that is naturally just and fully in keeping with nature. Such a city does not exist: it is a novelty that the philosopher posits when he envisions the just *polis* in his speech (1996, 184). The order of this new city is perfectly rational: nothing ensues in it that is not useful to the whole and, therefore, that tends to perfect each individual. There is no room in that order for anything sacred, noble, or simply private; specificities and particularities are eschewed for the sake of virtue and justice (1996, 184–5).

This introduces the problem of obedience. Why should the majority accept those demands—a necessary condition for a city led by philosophers? (1996, 183). The use of force, it is decided, would be necessary to ensure compliance with the laws. But, in order to have the power required to keep down the disobedient, the wise men would need a group of armed men against whom they could not themselves use force. But, unless those individuals are themselves wise, they may well not grasp why they must obey the city's harsh laws. To convince them, it would be necessary to come up with beautiful stories that might, in some case, resort to exaggeration or deception. "Even the rational society, the society according to truth and nature, is not possible without a fundamental untruth" (1996, 185). Any community, it would seem, requires stories, persuasive speeches, or poetry. In this dialogue, then, Plato

shows that he has learned the lesson of Aristophanes' comedies: his work shows that the philosopher (incarnated in a fictional Socrates) has accepted that reason alone cannot tame human impulses and that all rules require the backing of speeches that appeal not only to the reason but also the passions of individuals.

Like all other political orders, the best city requires, then, the art of persuasion, the skills that Thrasymachus masters. Strauss points out that the moment in the dialogue when that fact is recognized is the precise moment when Socrates declares that he and Thrasymachus have become friends (1978, 123). Regardless of that new friendship, though, the limitations of rhetoric in the founding of the just city surface as the plot advances. There is no speech capable of convincing the majority to comply with the onerous conditions required to establish the government of philosophers, conditions that include, for instance, banishing from the city everyone over the age of ten and, therefore, incapable of learning the virtues required for participating in the utopian community. Strauss points out that Plato's dialogue leads to the conclusion that the perfect city would only be possible if humanity were miraculously transformed (1996, 186).

In different ways throughout his work, Strauss asserts, Plato shows that, though the perfectly just city may not be possible in deed, it is useful in speech. It establishes a horizon of political legitimacy even if it does not provide an effective program of action. If noble deception is necessary to sustain even the perfect city, it is even more necessary to improve or to temper the worst impulses in real cities. The model of the just city appears, in that sense, to be the noble deception or fiction voiced by a fictional character that Plato uses to influence the majority.

So the philosopher shows once again that he has learned from Aristophanes' teachings; he understands that "philosophy stands or falls by the city" (Strauss 1996, 188) and he presents therefore a responsible Socrates defending the possibility of a perfect city in order to keep the majority from growing desperate or violent once it grasps how unlikely it is that solid parameters for true justice will be established. At the same time, the Socrates of the *Republic* shows careful readers the problems and limitation of political life. Thus, for Strauss, he can release us from the spell of political idealism, showing in exemplary fashion the limitations of any collective endeavor (Strauss 1996, 188). Modern philosophers, according to Strauss, largely failed to read the *Republic* with due prudence, leading them to draw mistaken conclusions. Insofar as thinkers like Hobbes believed they were improving the project of classical political philosophy when they asserted it was possible to devise and to enact the best political order (now on solid grounds, in their view), they were in fact subscribing, Strauss argues, to a fiction created by political philosophy in order

to relate to the city.¹⁸ That fiction presupposes that philosophers can grasp certain undeniable truths about nature, justice, and human life.

But if the *Republic* is, among other things, a work of fiction where a fictional character designs a perfect city to captivate the majority and to lead it to perform virtuous actions, one might well wonder if what Plato is attempting to do is to impose his vision by means of the power of discourse. It is worth wondering, in other words, if Thrasyarchus' thesis is really less accurate than Socrates'. Is it, in fact, impossible to sustain justice of any sort without recourse to force? Is Plato perhaps suggesting that no universal principle of justice is knowable? In other words, does Plato accept Aristophanes' point of view that philosophy is, in essence, a fruitless endeavor because it cannot attain any universal knowledge? Is Socrates' way of life meaningless? Plato's Socrates manages to avoid reaching these conclusions, Strauss asserts, by envisioning the justice of the city as parallel to the justice of the individual. Man is capable of a perfection that the city is not, and that is the perfection that should guide the city. The model of the virtuous Socrates presented by Plato shows that the dignity of political life comes from something that transcends it, from the most perfect or virtuous human activity of all: philosophy (1996, 187).

However, if it cannot be proven that certain knowledge of nature is possible, it cannot be proven that a given way of life is the most perfect or virtuous. Seth Benardete explains this problem: "as a part of nature, the science of [the political] would depend for its completion on the completion of the science of nature as a whole. It would therefore be incomplete as long as the science of the whole were incomplete" (1978, 3). Of course, Strauss is not unaware of that problem, pointing to it on more than one occasion (e.g., 1996, 191–3), thus leading us to wonder on what grounds Plato asserts that the philosophical life is the most elevated life, the one capable of providing dignity to political life. To answer that question, Strauss looks to the *Symposium*.

3.2 *The Symposium*

The *Symposium* stages a celebration at the home of the poet Agathon at which the guests agree to sing, in turn, the praises of *Erôs*. When Aristophanes' turn

18 "Plato's *Republic* as a whole, as well as other political works of the classical philosophers, can best be described as an attempt to supply a political justification for philosophy by showing that the well-being of the political community depends decisively on the study of philosophy" (Strauss 1988a, 93). Claudia Hilb develops this point in her analysis of the Straussian interpretation of Hobbes: "Hobbes, Strauss seems to suggest, would have been blind to the difference between the reflection of classical philosophy on the just city (and its conclusion that its realization is impossible) and the *fiction* of the possibility of a just city created by classical political philosophy" (2005, 138).

comes, he gets the hiccups. His body rebels against the rules the diners had agreed on and Aristophanes has to ask Eryximachus, the physician, to speak in his place. As in his own comedies, Aristophanes presents in amusing fashion the tension between nature and convention. *Phusis* inevitably overrides reason and human intentions, which must wait until the body allows them to surface. Even a law entered into entirely voluntarily has limits (1996, 150). Once his diaphragm has settled, Aristophanes takes part in the game. Agathon speaks after Aristophanes, and finally Socrates makes his speech. The encounter seems to reach its peak with these final speeches, the most beautiful and profound of all.¹⁹

While in their beautiful speeches Aristophanes and Socrates agree that *Erôs* is the impulse that leads to happiness, they do not agree on all else: whereas the poet describes *Erôs* as a horizontal impulse that leads all men towards their kindred type, the philosopher speaks of the possibility of an ascent from primary to more perfect forms of *Erôs*, and places philosophy on the highest rung in that scale (1996, 158). In other words, the most important difference between poetry and philosophy is Socrates, or the presence or absence of the philosopher at the peak of humanity.

Strauss suggests that Plato presents in such a manner the mutually exclusive alternatives proposed by poetry and philosophy: according to his view, both put forward competing accounts of the world and possible solutions to the problem of human happiness. These notions have much in common, but they differ in the shape they attribute to the cosmos: while Aristophanes' world can be figured as a circle, the Platonic universe fits into the shape of a triangle, or a pyramid. Strauss explains, assuming a Platonic point of view, that "the life which is not philosophic is either obviously incapable of solving the human problem or else it does solve the human problem in a wholly inadequate or in an absurd manner. In the first case it is the theme of tragedy. In the second case it is a theme of comedy" (1996, 205). Platonic philosophy, on the other hand, offers to the eyes of Strauss the only possible solution to the problem of happiness, the philosophical way of life: "to the extent to which the human problem cannot be solved by political means it can be solved only by philosophy, by and through the philosophic way of life" (1996, 205). For this reason, philosophy attempts to push poetry into a ministerial function:

19 Plato, unlike Aristophanes, presents his teacher Socrates as a wholly erotic man. His songs to the god of love and desire are greater than the speeches of some of the best poets in the city.

Poetry presents human life as human life appears if it is not seen to be directed toward philosophy. Autonomous poetry presents non-philosophic life as autonomous. Yet by articulating the cardinal problem of human life as it comes to sight within the non-philosophic life, poetry prepares for the philosophic life ... It ennobles passion and purifies passion. But autonomous poetry does not know the end for the sake of which the purification of passion is required.

STRAUSS 1996, 205

These arguments explain the profound meaning of the differences between poetry and philosophy presented by Strauss: what is at stake is the plausibility of a way of life that transcends the turmoil of human passions. The fictional Socrates portrayed in Plato's dialogues points to such a life, which is why it is at the center of Strauss's work, one that explores the possibility and the value of rehabilitating Platonic political philosophy for our days.

Nevertheless, what the *Symposium* makes clear is that neither the poet nor the philosopher can entirely prove his point, specifically because *Erôs*—that impulse that Aristophanes sees as horizontal and Socrates as vertical—forms part of the *phusis*, of that mysterious reality that slips away from human reason. Both Aristophanes and Socrates, therefore, must resort to telling beautiful and persuasive stories to back up their arguments. Socrates delivers the final speech and it is met by applause. But his triumph here, like in the *Republic*, is rhetorical, not philosophical. Aristophanes tries to rebut it—he seems to have something to say that would counter Socrates' view of *Erôs*—but we never find out what because the poet is interrupted by the arrival of a new guest—an admirer of Socrates, as chance would have it, whose praise of the philosopher is the last speech in the dialogue. As Strauss might suggest, it is not possible to demonstrate rationally the superiority of philosophical *Erôs*, to prove the indisputable superiority of the philosophical way of life over others, and so Plato has to turn to literary ruses to cover for Socrates.

Strauss remarks on the final lines of the *Symposium* in one of his famous lectures on the problem of Socrates (1996, 140) and in *Socrates and Aristophanes* (1980, 5). He points out that the work ends with Aristophanes' acceptance of one of the philosopher's theses. Strangely, given his concern for setting, Strauss says nothing about the circumstances in which that agreement is reached. Thus Strauss ends up provoking a new question: what actually happens at the end of the *Symposium*? At dawn, after hours of celebration, Socrates, Aristophanes, and Agathon—thus a philosopher and two poets—are the only ones left standing. He makes them acknowledge that good poets can compose comedies or tragedies. Nodding off and unable to follow the line of argument

very clearly, they give in to exhaustion. *The* philosopher stands up then from the table and leaves, ready to meet a new day.

What the dialogue seems to demonstrate is that, from Strauss' perspective, the superiority of Socrates' practice does not lie in its ability to persuade his interlocutors, but rather to wear them out. Unlike the Socrates depicted by Aristophanes, the philosopher here seems to understand and be able to navigate his own nature, human affairs, and rhetoric better than the rest. In this Platonic dialogue, Socrates is superior in part due to his words, but mostly due to his practical skills and sheer power of endurance.²⁰ The philosopher defeats the poets, rising above them to pursue investigations that transcend the greatest debates or celebrations. So, if the Socrates in the *Clouds* is a flea-ridden man who imperils the life of his fellows and the stability of the city by stirring up confusion and wrath, the Socrates in the *Symposium* is an intelligent, strong, erotic, and prudent being, one who lets others sleep peacefully while he pursues his bold interrogations.²¹

According to Strauss, then, Plato's dialogues are works of art that attempt to point to the most elevated way of life. They present a fictional Socrates as the paradigmatic example of the superiority of philosophy over other human activities. But though that superiority is upheld by philosophers, they cannot provide philosophical reasons for it. And, if philosophers cannot show their superiority, it is because they do not hold the key to everything, and without that key all human knowledge is uncertain.

4 Conclusion

As we have seen throughout this chapter, Strauss claims that Socrates is the model of classical political philosophy. He also says that the first thing that comes to the fore when a researcher sets out to study Socrates is his elusive character. Thus the figure of Socrates is a problem and not a simple answer to the question of the beginning or nature of political philosophy. This fact can be observed as early as in the works of Socrates' contemporaries, who portrayed him in different and poetic ways. Strauss suggests that the dispute

20 "We mentioned the exaggeration of the rhetorical power of the philosopher, which is only the reverse side of the abstraction from the bodily power of the philosophers to force the non-philosophers" (Strauss 1996, 190).

21 "The rule of practice is 'let sleeping dogs lie' do not disturb the established. In theoretical matters, the rule is 'do not let sleeping dogs lie'" (Strauss 2003, 1).

about the figure of Socrates shows the problematic foundations of political philosophy.

As we already stated, Strauss observes in Aristophanes' work some of the most powerful arguments against the possibility of philosophy, and in Plato's dialogues its best defense. Thus, he proposes a careful interpretation of their arguments in order to point out both the strength and the weakness of each position. Both poetry and philosophy have strong elements to support their points of view, but both rest on assumptions that cannot be indisputably demonstrated. Hence, Strauss suggests that philosophy is possible, but it is a *problematic* possibility.

The model of the kind of philosophy that is still possible for Strauss is not to be found in modern theories, but in the fictional character of Socrates presented by Plato. Plato shows through Socrates a particular kind of practice that consists in searching for knowledge without forgetting the political community and the context in which that search is carried out. The wisdom that philosophers try to achieve is never solid, since it is based on debatable premises. Thus, the only reality that remains stable for the philosopher is his own ignorance and the persistence of some problems. In this way, the philosopher is always forced to return to the beginning of his reflections, and his practice consists essentially in re-posing, again and again, the fundamental questions.

But this leads to two fundamental perplexities or inconsistencies in Strauss' description of Socrates and ancient political philosophy in general: the difficulty of distinguishing philosophy from poetry, and of separating theory from practice. The differences are indeed hard to establish if the archetype of philosophy is a *fictional* character produced to exhibit a particular kind of *practice* that is not based on rational premises but in certain *decisions*. Moreover, this entanglement makes it complicated to distinguish the Socratic philosophy depicted by Strauss' Plato from modern philosophy. If the possibility of philosophy cannot be indisputably demonstrated, if Platonic philosophy fabricates beautiful speeches and if Socrates' activity is based on *erôs*, one may wonder how far the practice that Strauss is willing to rehabilitate is from modern philosophy. As we already pointed out, Strauss criticizes the fundamentally practical character of modern philosophy, which unquestionably rejects the superiority of contemplation claimed by classical authors and ends up with thinkers like Nietzsche, asserting that philosophy should be based on acts of the will.

About these problems, which we do not intend to solve, we can say simply that it does not seem strange that a work which takes an elusive character as its model and suggests that problems are always more evident than solutions presents itself as problematic.

Strauss's interpretation of Socrates is revealed then as a problem. And perhaps the best way to try to understand it is to imitate the way the author approaches what he calls fundamental problems. According to Strauss:

philosophy ... is nothing but genuine awareness of the problems ... It is impossible to think about these problems without becoming inclined toward a solution, toward one or the other of the very few typical solutions.²² Yet, as long as there is no wisdom but only quest for wisdom, the evidence of all solutions is necessarily smaller than the evidence of the problems. Therefore, the philosopher ceases to be a philosopher at

22 About the typical solutions concerning Strauss' work, see Zuckert 2009, 263–86. It has been interpreted in various ways and it has provoked strong controversies. Although most of Strauss's readers agree that the author writes between the lines, they disagree in the content of the hidden teachings. Michael Zuckert analyzes the different ways Straussians understand Strauss' writing. Three are important for thinking about Socrates and the possibility of philosophy: (i) The Straussians that interpret Strauss as a *rationalist* and argue that the author is a philosopher who demonstrates that philosophy is undoubtedly possible. Knowledge of this possibility allows Strauss to refute revelation, the radical alternative to philosophy. Strauss is hiding his wisdom to avoid undermining the beliefs of the majority in God or certain gods. The elusive figure of Socrates both shows and hides the possibility of knowledge. According to Zuckert, Heinrich Meier epitomizes this view (167). (ii) The *decisionist* Straussians, who "say Strauss is ultimately a skeptic about philosophy. The choice for philosophy is itself arbitrary or the product of a mere ungrounded act of will" (170). Stanley Rosen and Lawrence Lampert endorse variants of this view. Rosen believes that "the Straussian teaching of the possibility and goodness of philosophy is an exoteric doctrine, persisted in by Strauss to keep other human beings from despairing of their situation out of despair for the truth." Strauss's "noble lie" is philosophy and the fictional character of Socrates is a part of that lie. (iii) The *zetetic or Socratic* Straussians, whose understanding can be summarized in a few lines: "The question of utmost urgency, the question which does not permit suspense [of judgment], is the question of how one should live. Now this question is settled for Socrates by the fact that he is a philosopher. As a philosopher he knows that we are ignorant of the most important things. The ignorance, the evident fact of this ignorance, evidently proves that quest for knowledge of the most important things is the most important thing for us" (275, quoting Strauss [1989a, 259]). According to Zuckert, philosophy "is most definitely a 'way of life' and not a set of doctrines, for what is 'evident' is the rightfulness of the quest, not any given conclusions. The substance of any refutation must remain hypothetical, but the case for the philosopher's life rests not on the 'evidentness' of the refutation but on the Socratic or zetetic case for the philosophical life" (275). Philosophy is the "right way of life," Socrates and the Socratics conclude, despite the fact that Socratic ignorance is unable to refute the possibility of revelation. The interpretation presented in this chapter coincides with this position.

the moment at which the 'subjective certainty' of a solution becomes stronger than his awareness of the problematic character of the solution.

STRAUSS 1988b, 116

Of course, like Strauss' interpretation of Socrates, our interpretation of Strauss is also one possible solution and it faces inevitably the perplexities that it tries to overcome: postulating Strauss's Socrates as an elusive and poetic figure that points out both the possibility and the problematic character of philosophy is in itself an answer. And this leads us back to the start: "the beginning or the questions retain greater evidence than the end or the answers, the return to the origin becomes a permanent necessity" (Strauss 1978, 21).

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“Sacrifice a Cock to Asclepius”: The Reception of Socrates in Foucault’s Final Writings

Leonard Lawlor

In the final years of his life, Foucault defines his work in two interrelated ways. On the one hand, his work investigates “the history of thought” (HSB 9),¹ where thought consists not only in what is said but also in what is done.² Foucault is particularly interested in thought’s (and the subject’s) relation to truth, to veridiction (truth-telling) and to alethurgy (the “doing” or manifestation of truth). On the other hand, Foucault’s investigations into the history of thought are subordinated to philosophy, where philosophy means “the critical work that thought brings to bear on itself” (UP 9). The critical work of philosophy aims “to enable one to get free of oneself,” in other words, to think otherwise. The two-sided definition of Foucault’s final thinking sets up the general framework within which his investigations of Socrates take place.

In fact, Socrates occupies three positions in Foucault’s final writings. First, Socrates represents a “moment” of transition or an “event” in the history of thought (HSB 9). This event also has two interrelated sides. On the one hand, for Foucault, it is the event when Western thought shifts from ascetical practices to cognitive practices. Western thought shifts from the care of the self to self-knowledge, from *epimeleia heautou* to *gnôthi seauton*. On the other hand, it is the event in Western thought when speaking-frankly (*parrhêsia*) shifts from being a political form of veridiction, within democracy, to being a philosophical form of veridiction. In a word, Socrates is not Solon (CT 77). At times, Foucault calls this transitional moment the “Socratic-Platonic moment” (HSB 30); at other times he simply calls it “the Platonic moment” (HSB 5), and at still other times, he calls it “the Platonic reversal” (CT 45). The simpler Platonic name for the event indicates the outcome of the transition: the

- 1 Foucault distinguishes the history of thought from the history of knowledge and the history of ideology. The history of thought is a history of “singular inventions” and ontologies of freedom. See GSO 310.
- 2 One can see the seeds of the history of thought in the *History of Madness*, where Foucault claims that his investigations there cannot be defined by the theory-practice dualism (Foucault 2006, 172). Here thought concerns the practices and discourses of the treatment of the mad and the discourses and practices of the conceptions of madness.

valorization of self-knowledge and the placement of speaking-frankly within the project of philosophical spiritual direction. Second, Socrates appears at the moment of a shift in Foucault's own thinking. Foucault himself tells us that he had been working on an "old, traditional question, which is at the heart of Western philosophy, [the question] of the relations between the subject and truth" (CT 3). At first, working on this question, Foucault studied the practices and kinds of discourse through which we Westerners have tried to tell the truth about the subject. Here he has in mind his study of the madman in the *History of Madness* (originally published in 1961) and his study of the delinquent subject in *Discipline and Punish* (originally published in 1975). But then, he tried to consider the same question of the relations between the subject and truth not from the perspective of the discourse of truth about the subject, but from the perspective "of the discourse of truth which the subject is likely and able to speak about himself" (Foucault 2001, 3; also 2014, 12–13). Here he has in mind his studies in pleasure and confession. In this set of investigations of the subject speaking the truth about himself, Socrates is the exemplary parrhesiast. Third, not only is "Socrates the parrhesiast" (CT 26), Socrates is "and always will be, the person associated with the care of the self" (HSB 8). As both the master of ascetical practices and the parrhesiast par excellence, Socrates therefore appears as a sort of hinge in the general dualism that seems to organize Foucault's thinking.³ This is the dualism, which Foucault late in his career calls an "apparatus" (*dispositif*)⁴ (see, e.g., Foucault 1977, 206), between corporeal practices and discursive practices.

Although the name "Socrates" is sprinkled throughout Foucault's writings,⁵ Foucault's thematic discussions of Socrates appear only in his last publications and his final courses at the Collège de France, that is, in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 2: The Use of Pleasure* (Foucault 1985) and *The History of Sexuality, Volume 3: The Care of the Self* (Foucault 1986), and in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject, Lectures at the Collège de France 1981–1982* (Foucault 2005), *The Government of Self and Others, Lectures at the Collège de France 1982–1983* (Foucault 2010), and *The Courage of Truth, The Government of Self and Others II, Lectures at the Collège de France 1983–1984* (Foucault 2011). The chapter that follows focuses exclusively on these five texts.⁶ In these texts, three Platonic dialogues are important for Foucault: the *Apology*, the *Alcibiades*, and the

3 See Deleuze 1988, 83–4.

4 Here the word "dispositif" is rendered as "mechanism": "the panoptic mechanism."

5 See Foucault 2006, xxix; 1998, 385.

6 The following texts were consulted for the writing of this essay: McGushin 2007; Gros and Lévy 2003; Gros 1996; and Hadot 1995, 206–13.

Laches. The *Apology*, for Foucault, presents Socrates in his dual role as the master of the care of the self and the parrhesiast par excellence. The *Alcibiades*, according to Foucault, brings to light that for which one is supposed to care: the soul. Here with the question of the soul, Foucault raises the question of “the great paradox of Platonism” (HSB 77). The *Laches* ends up at a different point than the *Alcibiades*: what one must care for here is not the soul but life. What is at issue in the *Laches* is an ethics of life.

The *Apology* plays a special role in Foucault’s study of Socrates because it initiates the trilogy of Platonic dialogues concerning Socrates’ death. The *Apology* leads Foucault to ponder Socrates’ final words found in the *Phaedo*, his so-to-speak last will and testament: “Sacrifice a cock to Asclepius.” According to Foucault, since these words are concerned with a cure, Socrates’ last words bequeath to Western thought the very idea of the care of the self.⁷ The care of the self is the truth Socrates was courageous enough to speak to the Athenians, to Alcibiades, and to Laches. To care for one self necessarily includes changing oneself—becoming other than oneself—in order to have access to the truth. As Foucault says, “the truth cannot be attained without a certain practice ... which transforms the subject’s mode of being, changes its given mode of being, and modifies it by transfiguring it” (HSB 46). Therefore, Socrates’ final words, as we shall see, presage Foucault’s own final words of his final lecture: “the truth is never the same; there can be truth only in the form of the other world and the other life” (CT 340).

1 Only a Hint of the Essential Features of *epimeleia heautou* and *parrhêsia* (*The Care of the Self* and *The Use of Pleasure*)

Prior to uttering these final words, Foucault managed to publish the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality*.⁸ The last two volumes concern respectively ancient Greek thought of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE (*The Use of Pleasure*) and Greco-Roman thought of the first and second centuries CE (*The Care of the Self*). *The Use of Pleasure*, in particular, aims to show how ancient Greek erotics differs from Christian practices of sexuality. The ancient Greeks thought of erotics in terms of a style of life and self-mastery, while the Christians thought of love in terms of obedience to a code and purification.⁹ *The Care of the Self* concerns the forms of cultivation that Greco-Roman

⁷ For the contrasting interpretation of Nietzsche’s, see Raymond (in this volume), 837–880.

⁸ The fourth volume of the history of sexuality has appeared posthumously (Foucault 2018).

⁹ Foucault expands on his interpretation of Christianity in Foucault 2018.

self-mastery required—the first and second centuries are “the golden age of the care of the self” (Foucault 2005, 81)—and displays the seeds within that Classical self-cultivation of Christian attitudes toward sex. Despite similarities between the care of the self and Christian purification techniques, the two regimes are very different ways of constituting oneself as an ethical subject of one’s sexual behavior (CS 240). The ancient Greek constitution and the Greco-Latin constitution of the ethical subject are indebted to Socrates. As Foucault says in *The Care of the Self*, the theme of the care of the self was “consecrated by Socrates” (CS 44).

Foucault found at the heart of ancient Greek erotics a dynamic of self dominating or mastering itself, the struggle of *enkrateia* (UP 65). Self-mastery is the prerequisite for *sôphrosunê*, that is, for moderation or temperance. According to Foucault, the exercise of self-mastery is agonistic. One has to adopt a combative attitude toward the erotic pleasures (*aphrodisia*), as if the pleasures were the enemy (UP 67–9). The ancient Greek idea of a combative attitude toward these “internal rivals” opens “the long tradition of spiritual combat” (HSB 34; UP 67). The polemical attitude toward what is a part of oneself is supposed to result in “victory” (UP 69). In contrast to Christian penitential practices, the victory was not characterized as the extirpation of desires resulting in self-purification, according to Foucault. It was characterized as enough control of the intensity of desires and pleasures that one would never give way to their violence. In the context of the victory over the vivacity of desires and pleasure, Foucault cites “the famous test of Socrates, in which he proves himself capable of resisting seduction by Alcibiades” (UP 69). Now, in order to win the victory exemplified by Socrates, one has to undergo “training.” Just as with other techniques, one has to practice. As Foucault says, “*mathêsis* alone was not sufficient; it had to be backed up by ... an *askêsis*. This was one of the great Socratic lessons” (UP 72). In *The Use of Pleasure*, then, Foucault refers to the requisite spiritual training as “the Socratic principle of *askêsis*” (UP 72–3, 211). Although *mathêsis* and knowledge are not sufficient conditions for the care of the self, knowledge nevertheless is a necessary condition. The *logos*, according to Foucault, not only must be the controlling agency in the soul, it also must function as a means of self-recognition. As he says, “the necessity to know oneself in order to practice virtue and subdue the desires is a Socrates theme” (UP 88).

In *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault adds that a dialogue like the *Phaedrus* provides the form the knowledge must take; the *Phaedrus* recounts the first description in ancient literature of “spiritual combat” (UP 88). Here we can see a theme that will be prevalent in the lecture courses: a tension between the “know thyself” (*gnôthi seauton*) and the principle of “the care for oneself”

(*epimeleia heauton*). While one volume of *The History of Sexuality* bears the title of *The Care of the Self*, making the care of the self a dominant theme in Foucault's studies of sexuality, there is no explicit mention of *parrhêsia*. The lecture courses' theme of *parrhêsia* appears in *The Use of Pleasure* only when Foucault says that self-knowledge in Socrates was never equivalent to Christian confessional practices, to "a hermeneutics of desire," in which there was "an obligation for the subject to speak truthfully about himself" (UP 89). As we shall see, in his final lecture course, *The Courage of Truth*, Foucault directly connects the care of the self to speaking-frankly. Before we turn to the lecture courses, we need to frame their two main themes. *The Care of the Self* and *The Use of Pleasure* only hint at the essential features of *epimeleia heautou* and *parrhêsia*.¹⁰

2 The Essential Features of *epimeleia heautou* and *parrhêsia* according to Foucault

2.1 *Epimeleia heautou*

In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault presents what he calls "the schema" of the care of the self (HSB 10–11). It consists in three essential characteristics. First, the care of the self is a certain kind of general attitude towards the self, others, and the world. One cares for oneself in order to govern others and the *polis*. Second, the care of the self is a certain form of attention, of looking. One converts one gaze from the outside, from others, and the world, towards oneself. It is a certain way of attending to one's thoughts and what takes place in one thoughts. Third, in addition to the general attitude and conversion of one's gaze, the care of the self designates a number of actions exercised by the self on the self. These actions allow one to change, purify, transform, and transfigure oneself. According to Foucault, these practices and exercises (*askêseis*) emerge from an ancient tradition that is prior to Socrates and Plato (HSB 47–8), and they have a long destiny in Western culture, philosophy, morality, and spirituality (HSB 11). For Foucault, these ascetical practices refer to "a will for radical ethical change" (HSB 12).

The ascetical exercises of radical ethical self-transformation allow one to take responsibility for oneself, but taking responsibility for oneself requires that one have access to the truth. These exercises are the price one has to pay in order to have access to the truth. The exercises are the heart of what Foucault calls "spirituality" (HSB 15). As with the schema for the care of the

¹⁰ For a discussion of care of the self, see Foucault 1997, 286.

self, spirituality, for Foucault, consists in three characteristics. First, the truth is not given by a simple act of knowledge. It must be earned through these practices. Second, since the truth is not given by a simple epistemic act, the truth is given only through a kind of work to be done on oneself through which the subject changes and becomes other than himself. In order to have access to the truth, the subject must go through a conversion. Third, the conversion to the truth has a rebound effect on the subject. The truth gives beatitude and tranquility to the soul. As Foucault says, "in and of itself an act of knowledge could never give access to the truth unless it was prepared, accompanied, doubled, and completed by a certain transformation of the subject" (HSB 16). In short, it is not *gnôthi seauton* that alone gives one access to the truth; the truth requires *epimeleia heauton*. Of course, Socrates is the person with whom we always associate the Delphic oracle motto, but he is also, for Foucault, the character with whom we should associate the care of the self.

2.2 *Parrhêsia*

Keeping in mind that Socrates is the hinge between *epimeleia heauton* and *parrhêsia*, we can turn to speaking-frankly. Most generally, for Foucault, *parrhêsia* is a form of truth-telling that is not rhetorical and is not intended for the advancement of the speaker. Fundamentally, *parrhêsia* tells the truth without adornment, and the truth is told not for the benefit of the speaker but for the benefit of the one who listens. More specifically, Foucault presents the essence of *parrhêsia* in two ways.

On the one hand, he presents structural features. *parrhêsia* opens the speech situation to effects that are not known. *Parrhêsia* does not produce a coded effect; it produces "an unspecified risk," the worst of which is the death of the speaker. *Parrhêsia* is dangerous (CT 10). The danger of *parrhêsia* distinguishes this speech act from other discursive strategies such as demonstration, persuasion, teaching or pedagogy, and debating (GSO 53–7).¹¹ *Parrhêsia* also

11 In *The Government of Self and Others*, Foucault also distinguishes *parrhêsia* from Socratic, or Platonic-Socratic, irony: "Socratic irony involves a game in which the master pretends not to know and leads the student to formulate what he, the student, did not know that he knows. In *parrhêsia*, however, as if it were a veritable anti-irony, the person who tells the truth throws the truth in the face of his interlocutor, a truth which is so violent, so abrupt, and said in such a peremptory and definitive way that the person facing him can only fall silent, or choke with fury, or change to a different register ..." (GSO 54). Because he distinguishes *parrhêsia* from Socratic irony, Foucault's interpretation of Socrates seems at first glance to differ from that of Merleau-Ponty and Lyotard. However, like Foucault, both Merleau-Ponty and Lyotard focus on Socrates' way of speaking. In particular, Merleau-Ponty (following a distinction made by Hegel) distinguishes between good irony and bad irony, where bad irony is based in "self-conceit," while good irony "is an attempt

binds the speaker to the truth he is telling. With *parrhêsia*, there is a “pact of the speaking subject with himself” (CT 11). In *The Courage of Truth*, in the analysis of the *Laches*, Foucault also describes “the propitious moment” of *parrhêsia*, when the interlocutors agree to be questioned without becoming angry (CT 128–33, 141–2).¹² Finally, in *parrhêsia*, the person speaking exercises his own freedom as an individual speaker (GSO 66). The exercise of one’s own freedom explains the “courage in the heart of *parrhêsia*.” It is why the Romans translated *parrhêsia* as *libertas*, “speaking freely” (GSO 46).

On the other hand, Foucault presents *parrhêsia* by means of the persona of the parrhesiast. He contrasts the parrhesiast with three other modalities of truth-telling: the prophet, the sage, and the teacher (CT 15–25).¹³ In this discussion, we see five characteristics of the parrhesiastic persona emerge. First, the parrhesiast speaks in his own name. This first characteristic distinguishes him from the prophet who is a mouthpiece. Second, the parrhesiast feels an obligation to speak. This characteristic distinguishes him from the sage who can keep his wisdom to himself. Third, the parrhesiast speaks, as we saw, without rhetoric; he speaks clearly and distinctly, which distinguishes him from the prophet and the sage. Fourth, like the sage who speaks of what is, and unlike the prophet who foretells the future, the parrhesiast speaks of what is, in the present, but in relation to the singularity of individuals. Finally, unlike the teacher (who feels an obligation to share his knowledge), the parrhesiast—and here we return to the danger of *parrhêsia*—risks his life. Unlike the teacher

to open both of us up for freedom” (see Merleau-Ponty 1970, 36–41). Similarly, Lyotard claims that Socrates is not “feigning” ignorance: “Stating as he does that he lacks wisdom is no feint as far as [Socrates] is concerned. Quite the contrary: it is the hypothesis of the feint that proves how much he does lack wisdom, since it presupposes, in its naïve stratagem, that the philosopher really is wise and that he is saying the opposite the better to intrigue ... Now believing that Socrates has wisdom to exchange, wisdom for sale, is precisely the madness that he is attacking” (Lyotard 2013, 35–6). Pierre Hadot seems to unify Merleau-Ponty to Foucault by citing Merleau-Ponty’s “In Praise of Philosophy” at the open of the section on Socrates and the care of the self in his *What is Ancient Philosophy?* (Hadot 2004, 36). In his *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, however, Hadot takes Foucault to task in his reading of the ancient principle of care of the self, claiming that Foucault propounds a “culture of the self which is *too* aesthetic” (Hadot 1995, 211). Finally, and truly in distinction from Foucault, Merleau-Ponty, Lyotard, and Hadot, Deleuze and Guattari, when they are defining philosophy as the creation of concepts in *What is Philosophy?* (1994), never mention Socrates.

12 Plato’s relation to Dionysius of Syracuse is, for Foucault, an exemplary case of *parrhêsia*. However, with Dionysius, there is no “propitious moment” of *parrhêsia*. Plato must flee for his life (GSO 50, 65).

13 Foucault (2001, 25–6) stresses that these persona are not social types but modalities of truth-telling.

who establishes a relation of filiation with his apprentice, the parrhesiast might turn his listener into an enemy. Of course, in the five characteristics of the parrhesiastic persona, we can see the figure of Socrates.

As Foucault says, "Socrates is the parrhesiast" (CT 26). However, Foucault immediately reminds us that Socrates receives the mission to question people from the oracle at Delphi. Therefore, his function as a parrhesiast is not unrelated to the prophetic function. Similarly, Socrates has a relation to wisdom. Insofar as Socrates asks question and does not make speeches, he resembles the sage. Yet, what distinguishes Socrates from the sage is his claim that he does not know; this is why he asks questions. The sage, in contrast, claims to know but he holds his knowledge in reserve. As Foucault says, "Questioning is ... a particular way of combining the essential reserve of the sage, who remains silent, with the duty of the *parrhêsia*" (CT 27). Finally, there is the relation to the teacher or technician. The Socratic problem lies in teaching the virtue and knowledge necessary to live well or to govern the city. Again, Socrates is the parrhesiast, but with, as Foucault says, "a permanent, essential relationship to prophetic veridiction, the veridiction of wisdom, and the technical veridiction of teaching" (CT 27).

3 *Epimeleia heautou and Parrhêsia: Foucault's Analysis of Socrates in the Apology of Plato (The Hermeneutics of the Subject, The Government of Self and Others, and The Courage of Truth)*

Socrates, both as the person associated with the care of the self and as the parrhesiast, is best seen, for Foucault, in the *Apology*. As we said, the *Apology* plays a special role in what Foucault says about Socrates. We shall first examine Foucault's analysis of Socrates in the *Apology* as the master of the care of the self. In fact, the subject matter of the 1981–1982 lecture course, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, is the care of the self in ancient philosophy. Then we shall examine Foucault's analysis of Socrates in the *Apology* as the parrhesiast par excellence. Both the 1982–1983 lecture course, *The Government of Self and Others*, and the 1983–1984 lecture course, *The Courage of Truth*, concern *parrhêsia*.

3.1 *Epimeleia heautou*

In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault admits that the course theme of *epimeleia heautou* is strange since Western philosophy seems to be founded on the prescription of "know thyself." Because the course's theme seems to be at odds with the foundation of Western philosophy, Foucault begins the course with some speculations about the original meaning of the Delphic precept,

“know thyself” (HSB 3–4). Although Foucault admits that the original meaning is unclear, he claims that the Delphic precept was probably a prescription for those who visited the oracle: since you are able to ask the oracle only a few questions, you should make sure to know what you need to ask (for this view he cites Roscher 1901 and Defradas 1954). Probably, according to Foucault, the meaning was not philosophical; it was not a principle of self-knowledge. The Delphic precept appears in philosophy with the character of Socrates. Now when the “know thyself” appears in philosophy, it is “coupled,” as Foucault says, with the care of the self. Here, Foucault anticipates his analysis of the *Alcibiades*, to which we shall turn in the next section. As we shall see, in the *Alcibiades* the principle of “care for thyself” emerges and it is coupled to the principle of “know thyself.” In fact, in the *Alcibiades* the care of the self ends up being subordinated to self-knowledge. Thus Foucault also says that “in some [ancient] texts, there is a kind of subordination” of the care of the self to the “know thyself” (HSB 4). Nevertheless, in the *Apology*, “Socrates appears as the person whose essential, fundamental, and original function, job, and position is to encourage others to attend to themselves, take care of themselves, and not neglect themselves” (HSB 5).

There are, according to Foucault, three passages in the *Apology* that link Socrates to the care of the self. In the first (29d–e), Socrates is presenting a sort of imaginary defense plea before his accusers and judges. To the objection that he has led a shameful life, he responds by saying that he is proud of his life and will not change it. At this moment (29e), Socrates says that he will never stop exhorting and telling anyone he meets not to care about wealth, reputation, and honors, but to work on the constant improvement or perfection of the soul: “attend to yourself.” This is Socrates’ task. The second passage (30c) is the famous one in which Socrates compares himself to a horsefly. If the Athenians condemn Socrates to death, they will suffer a heavy loss. They will no longer have anyone who “stings” them into caring for themselves. The third passage (36b–c) concerns Socrates’ punishment. Socrates claims that he should not be punished if the Athenians want to be just. Socrates says, I have neglected the things that others care for (again, wealth, reputation, and honors), while trying to persuade you to care for yourself.

From these passages in the *Apology*, Foucault draws four conclusions. First, the activity of encouraging others to care for themselves is Socrates’ activity. However, this activity is given to Socrates by the gods. Socrates carries out an order and has a task that is determined by the gods. As we saw a moment ago, Socrates’ persona resembles the persona of the prophet. Foucault will return to the question of Socrates’ relation to the gods in *The Courage of Truth*. Second, if Socrates cares for others, he will not care for himself. As in

Apology 36b–c, Socrates neglects what everyone else cares for. For Foucault, Socrates' self-sacrifice raises a problem that will appear later in ancient thought: the problem of the position occupied by master in the care of the self. Early Christianity, in its idea of pastoral power, will especially address this problem (Foucault 2007, 128–30). Third, although Foucault admits that he did not present any passage from the *Apology* to support this point, it is evident that Socrates' exhortation of others to care for themselves awakens them and opens their eyes. Finally, fourth, the image of the horsefly suggests a principle of restlessness and movement. Throughout one's life, one should be working on caring for oneself. From these four points, Foucault concludes in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* that we should rescue the care of the self from the "know thyself." Foucault argues that (and we have already quoted this passage), even if we associate the precept of "know thyself" with Socrates, "Socrates is, and always will be, the person associated with the care of the self" (HSB 8).

3.2 *Parrhêsia*

At the beginning we identified a two-sided event in the history of thought that orients Foucault's discussions of Socrates. As we shall see, Foucault presents the side of the event in which ascetical practices are transformed into cognitive practices (anticipating Descartes and modern thought) in *The Courage of Truth*, when he analyzes the *Alcibiades*. The *Alcibiades*, according to Foucault, shows the care of the self becoming self-knowledge. Here in the two earlier lecture courses, through his analysis of the *Apology*, Foucault presents the side of the event in which political *parrhêsia* becomes philosophical or ethical *parrhêsia*. The parrhesiastic shift consists in the site of *parrhêsia* being displaced from the political field, and in particular from democracy, to the philosophical field. As we said, Socrates, for Foucault, is not Solon, but he is also not Pericles (GSO 353). The shift from politics to philosophy includes an opposition between rhetorical discourse, the discourse of flattery and artifice appropriate for arguing in a democracy, and philosophical discourse, which is *parrhêsia*. Recall that, above all else, *parrhêsia* is not rhetoric.

According to Foucault in *The Government of Self and Others*, the *Apology* is the "practical text par excellence of *parrhêsia* (GSO 310). It is thus the text in which we see the opposition between rhetoric and philosophy. Foucault analyzes three sets of passages in the *Apology*, with the first set concerning Socrates' own discourse, the second concerning Socrates' political role, and the third concerning Socrates' *actual* role in the *polis*. The first set of passages appears at the very beginning of the *Apology* (17a). Socrates immediately says that his adversaries are people who have spoken falsely about him. But they have spoken about him in such a way that they have almost convinced

him. And what they have said is that Socrates is someone who is clever in the art of speaking. Against this portrayal of himself, Socrates portrays himself as a truth-teller without any art (*technê*). Foucault identifies the primary characteristic of Socrates as the artless truth-teller: Socrates is a “stranger” to the political field (GSO 312). Being a stranger to the political field is a common theme in ancient juridical literature. However, according to Foucault, Socrates takes up the common juridical theme with a difference.¹⁴

The difference is that Socrates *speaks* in a way that is strange or foreign to the political field. It is strange or foreign in three ways. First, his speech has not adopted a special form for the Assembly; it is the language that Socrates uses in the public square. Thus, unlike rhetorical discourse, philosophical *parrhêsia* does not establish a discontinuity of vocabulary, form, or construction, between the language he is using in the Assembly and his everyday language (GSO 313). Second, Socrates states that these words and phrases are those that occur to him. They are spontaneous and translate the very movement of thought, “without reconstruction and without artifice” (GSO 313). Finally, third, Socrates’ discourse is a language in which he says exactly what he thinks. There is an act of trust at the heart of his discourse. As we saw above, what defines *parrhêsia* is a pact with oneself. For Socrates, according to Foucault, these three aspects form “a unity characteristic of *parrhêsia*” that distinguishes it from rhetoric: speaking without embellishment; things said spontaneously without reconstruction; and trust in what is said (GSO 314). The three aspects are so unified that they define not only a sincere discourse but also an authentic discourse. The bare and simple, spontaneous discourse is “the language closest to the truth.” While rhetorical discourse is chosen, fashioned, and constructed, philosophical discourse as authentic, as unadorned and unconstructed, is adequate to the truth (GSO 314–15). As authentic, philosophical discourse states the truth of reality and expresses the soul of the person speaking. While rhetorical discourse is formed to have an effect on the listener, the authentic, philosophical discourse concerns the speaking subject.

The second and third sets of passages are connected. The first concerns Socrates’ political role (31c–e).¹⁵ The question posed in the *Apology* by Socrates’ accusers is: if you are a truth-teller, then why have you never addressed the Assembly? Why have you never been a political parrhesiast? Socrates’ response is that if he had addressed the Assembly, he would have been risking his own life. Thus he has lived the life of a private individual. Foucault stresses that

14 In *The Courage of Truth*, Foucault will again take up the opening words of the *Apology* (CT 74–5).

15 Foucault returns to Socrates’ political role in *The Courage of Truth* (CT 76–81).

here Socrates is alluding to the fact that *parrhêsia* does not function well in Athenian democracy. In the situation of Athenian democracy, there is no obligation to speak the truth frankly; it is not worth the risk. To explain this non-participation in democracy, Socrates states that his *daimon* (Foucault's way of referring to the *daimonion* sign) ordered him not to participate. Thus, while rhetorical discourse takes place in the field of politics, philosophical discourse holds itself outside of the political field. And yet, as the third set of passages shows (32a–e), the philosopher takes a stand in relation to politics from the exterior of politics. After referring to his *daimon* Socrates describes his earlier involvement in Athenian politics. He was obliged to serve because he was a member of the ruling tribe, and under the tyranny of the Thirty he had no choice. Socrates recounts two stories. First, in the Athenian democratic assembly he voted against condemning certain generals who had failed to retrieve the slain bodies of the Athenians soldiers after a battle. Foucault focuses on the second story that Socrates recounts. When the oligarchy of the Thirty ordered Socrates to arrest Leon of Salamis to be put to death, Socrates "simply went home" (32d). This simple action indicates Socrates' *actual* relation to politics. In contrast to what his *daimon* told him, he entered politics and consequently risked his life. As Foucault points out, there is clearly a contrast between the *daimon*'s order not to enter politics and Socrates' risking of his life as a senator. In the first case, we have *parrhêsia* practiced "as a direct political power, as an ascendancy exercised over others" (GSO 318). The voluntary political intervention belongs to politics, not philosophy. As we just noted, philosophical *parrhêsia* does not tell the truth to politics in politics. In the second case, however, the philosopher finds himself in an involuntary position, in a system. Then the philosopher has to play the role of parrhesiast at the cost of his own life in relation to politics. In fact, merging the care of the self with *parrhêsia*, Foucault claims that Socrates must be the parrhesiast out of care for himself. If Socrates had obeyed the Thirty, he would have committed an injustice. However, what Foucault stresses is that, in the second case, Socrates did not speak; he did something (he went home). In this case, Socrates does not speak the truth (*logos*); his action or deed (*ergon*) is the "manifestation of truth." Socrates really risked his life. Here, as Foucault says, the philosopher is "the agent of truth. *Parrhêsia* [is] a form of life ... a way of behaving" (GSO 319–20). The philosopher's way of life, his *êthos*, distinguishes him from the persona of the rhetorician.

While *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* concerns the separation of *parrêsia* from rhetoric, *The Courage of Truth* concerns the event in which *parrhêsia* is displaced from politics to philosophy or ethics. The first half of *the Apology*, according to Foucault, is the establishment of another truth-telling that is the

converse of political truth-telling; this is “the truth-telling of philosophy.” The *Apology* establishes “a particular kind of exercise,” as Foucault says, “a particular practice of truth-telling ... which is completely different from those that may take place on the political stage” (CT 81). The philosophical truth-telling can be schematized in three moments. The three moments are an investigation, a journey of testing souls, and the ensuing hostility.

We discover the first moment in relation to the gods, to Apollo, and to prophecy. As everyone knows, Socrates’ friend, Chaerephon, went to ask the god of Delphi: what Greek is wiser than Socrates? The answer is: no one is wiser than Socrates. For Foucault, what is important in this well-known story is that Socrates does not adopt the normal attitude toward the enigmatic statement of the oracle. Socrates does not understand the statement, but he does not engage in a mode of interpretation to discover its secret meaning. Instead of decipherment, Socrates engages in a “search” or “investigation.” Socrates wants to test what the oracle said, subject it to verification, to dispute and challenge it in order to find out if it is true. The second moment appears in the way Socrates pursues this investigation. His investigation is a journey. He goes throughout Athens questioning people of varying status (politicians, craftspeople). Socrates subjects all of them to an examination (*exetasis*). All of them, of course, turn out to claim to know things that in reality they do not know. Socrates tries to find out what they do and do not know about their profession, but also what they do and do not know about themselves. In short, Socrates tests their souls. But he tests their souls in order to compare them to his own soul, trying to verify the oracle’s pronouncement. Through the testing, it turns out that Socrates is wiser than anyone else, since at the least he knows about his own ignorance. As Foucault says, “And this is how Socrates’ soul becomes the touchstone (*basanos*) of the souls of others” (CT 84). When we turn to Foucault’s analysis of the *Laches* below, we shall again see Socrates’ persona defined by being the *basanos*. In any case, it is finally Socrates’ role as touchstone, rubbing other souls against his own, that earns him great hostility, resulting in his trial.

And yet, despite this hostility, which threatens his life, Socrates continues on his mission. The risk of life and death, which was the very reason that prevented Socrates from engaging in politics (as we saw above), is here “at the very heart of his enterprise” (CT 85). Socrates, as Foucault stresses, has the courage of truth-telling but one that is clearly different from political *parrhêsia*. The aim of philosophical *parrhêsia* lies in encouraging others to take care, not of their wealth, reputation, honors and offices: they must take care of themselves (CT 86). The self-relation in the care of the self is, according to Foucault, defined by

phronêsis (or practical reason). Therefore, we now have a *parrhêsia* whose sole aim is the foundation of *êthos*. Through Socrates, the function of *parrhêsia* has shifted from political influence to ethical influence. For Foucault, the Socratic moment is the event that transforms political *parrhêsia* into philosophical *parrhêsia*. Before we leave the *Apology*, we must note that Foucault also claims that philosophical *parrhêsia* must be related to the truth. But truth in philosophical *parrhêsia*, according to Foucault, must be based ontologically in the being of the soul (CT 86). This ontological foundation anticipates what we shall now see in the *Alcibiades*.

4 "The Great Paradox of Platonism": Foucault's Analysis of Socrates in the *Alcibiades* (*The Hermeneutics of the Subject*)

As we anticipated above, the *Alcibiades*, for Foucault, is "the emergence of the imperative 'to care for oneself'" (HSB 45); it is "the first major theoretical emergence of the *epimeleia heautou*," and "the only comprehensive theory of the care of the self in all of Plato's texts" (HSB 46). It is the dialogue in which the care of the self is "the justificatory framework, ground, and foundation for the imperative 'know thyself'" (HSB 8). Foucault outlines the context in which the care of the self emerges. There are three elements to the context (HSB 43–5). First, Alcibiades has come of age in which he is able to enter politics. Caring for oneself allows one to pass from the privilege of wealth and rank to definite political action (HSB 36). Thus the care of the self is connected to the government of others. Second, the care of the self appears in the context of a pedagogical problem. In the *Alcibiades*, Athenian education is criticized in two ways. On the one hand, unlike Persian education, Athenian education does not provide the four masters who can educate future leaders in the four virtues (wisdom, justice, moderation, and courage) (121e). On the other hand, there is the problem of love. Adult men pursue young boys in the bloom of youth, but abandon them at the critical age when they are about to enter politics. So there is a "double failing of pedagogy" (HSB 44). The third contextual element is a familiar one in Plato's Socratic dialogues: ignorance. One needs to care for oneself because one does not know the things one should know and one does not even know that one does not know these things. Here we see the first mention of the Delphic oracle motto, "know thyself," in the *Alcibiades* (HSB 35; 124b). In the *Alcibiades* there will be two more mentions of the motto. In any case, Socrates does not say to Alcibiades that, although you are ignorant and still young, you have time to learn the rhetoric needed to exercise power

in the city. Foucault points out that “Socrates says: you are ignorant; but you are young and so you have time, not to learn [rhetoric], but to take care of yourself” (HSB 46).

When the care of the self emerges in the *Alcibiades*, Socrates immediately raises a question. According to Foucault, Socrates asks about that for which one must care. In order to answer this question, Socrates refers again to the Delphic oracle motto of “know thyself” (HSB 52; 129a). The second occurrence of the *gnôthi seauton* is stronger than the first. In fact, it appears, as Foucault says, “in a completely different way and at a different level” (HSB 52). When Socrates refers this time to the Delphic motto, he is not telling Alcibiades that he should be more aware of the wealth of other cities and their superior form of education; he is telling Alcibiades that he must know the nature of the self. This knowledge is different from the knowledge of other things because it is knowledge of what is the same as ourselves. The knowledge of the self does not resemble, for example, the knowledge needed to make shoes. The imperative of the care of the self is formed with a reflexive pronoun (*seauton*) (HSB 53). The answer to the question of the nature of the self of course is the soul.

When Socrates tells Alcibiades that the nature of the self is the soul (CS 201; 130c), it seems as though Socrates’ answer corresponds to what we find in many other Platonic dialogues. However, Foucault argues that “the way in which the soul is conceived of here [in the *Alcibiades*] is quite different from what is found elsewhere [in other dialogues]” (HSB 54). In order to show us how the conception of the soul differs from its conception in other Platonic dialogues, Foucault leads us through the series of question that Socrates poses to Alcibiades (HSB 54–5; 129b–130c). The first question posed concerns Socrates as a speaker. Within the action of speaking, a distinction can be made between the one doing the speaking and the elements of speech (words and sounds, for example). Similarly, when Socrates asks Alcibiades about the body, it is not the body that makes use of the body; it is the soul that makes use of the body. According to Foucault, this distinction allows us to isolate the soul as the subject of the action. In particular, Foucault emphasizes the Greek verb *chrêsthai* (“se server de” in French or “make use of” in English) with all of its polysemy (HSB 56). *Chrêsthai* designates several kinds of relationships that one can have with something and with oneself. It means that I use or utilize, make use of something like a tool. But it also designates my behavior or attitude, and my relationship to other people. The notion of *chrêsthai* is not merely an instrumental relation; it designates “the subject’s singular, transcendent position, as it were, with regard to what surrounds him, to the objects available to him, but also to other people with whom he has a relationship” (HSB 57). It designates the soul as agent (HSB 73). Thus the way the soul is conceived

here is not identical to its conception in the *Phaedo*, as a prisoner of the body; it is not identical to the soul as a pair of winged horses as in the *Phaedrus*; and it is not the soul as a hierarchy of levels that must be harmonized as in the *Republic*. In particular, and especially, Foucault stresses that the soul conceived in the *Alcibiades* as subject is not the soul as substance (HSB 57). Not being a substance, the soul can change. Because the soul is conceived in the *Alcibiades* not only as an instrumental relation but also as attitudes and behaviors, the soul can be transformed by the practices of the care of the self. The malleability of the soul in this conception explains Foucault's talk of regimens, strategies, and styles of using pleasure in *The Use of Pleasure* (HSB 53–62).

In his analysis, Foucault does not concern himself with the question of the *Alcibiades*' authenticity (HSB 43). However, he is concerned with its dating (HSB 46, 72). Foucault agrees with scholars who claim that the *Alcibiades* may have been redacted after Plato's death (HSB 73–4, citing Weil 1964). Its composition suggests that it "straddles Plato's entire work," from his youthful writings to "established Platonism." But even if other authors composed the version of the dialogue we have today, the *Alcibiades*, according to Foucault, "bears witness" to the "first stage" of a major shift in the reorganization of ancient techniques of the care of the self, techniques (purification, concentration, withdrawal, and tests [HSB 47–8]). "Somewhere between Socrates and Plato" these old techniques undergo a profound reorganization (HSB 51). This "Socratic-Platonic moment" is when the techniques enter philosophy. The *Alcibiades* indicates the moment in "the pure history" of the care of the self when the care of the self comes to be subordinated to self-knowledge. In "its strictly Platonic form," the care of the self finds its form and realization in self-knowledge. Self-knowledge then gives one access to the truth, and that truth consists in knowing the divine in one's soul (HSB 76; see also CT 86). The divine in one's soul is the ontological foundation of the care of the self. Foucault concludes his analysis of the *Alcibiades* with "the 'great paradox of Platonism'" (HSB 77). On the one hand, in the history of thought, Platonism was the "principal haven" for the development of spiritual movements. Only through spiritual practices is one able to gain access to the divine truth. On the other hand, Platonism provided the climate for the development of movements of knowledge. Because self-knowledge is the realization of the care of the self, Platonism opens "a movement of pure knowledge without any condition of spirituality" (HSB 77). Platonism plays a "double game." Thus the *Alcibiades*, for Foucault, opens up one line of development in Western philosophy that ends up in cognitive practices. The *Laches*, as we shall see now, opens up a very different line, which is an ethics of life.

5 Basanos: Foucault's Analysis of Socrates in the *Laches* (*The Courage of Truth*)

Foucault makes three main points in his analysis of the *Laches*. First, based on the opening passages of the dialogue, Foucault claims that the interlocutors set up a “zone of truth-telling” (CT 130). There will be no flattery and no prejudices. Nicias and Laches, who are eminent statesmen, will speak their mind about the demonstration of armed combat they have just witnessed. The protected site of truth-telling continues throughout the dialogue. As Foucault says, “*parrêsia* is in fact the sign under which the dialogue will proceed” (CT 130, translation modified). However, the reason Melisias and Lysimachus, who are, so to speak, the sponsors of the dialogue, have set up the zone for *parrhêsia* in that they need help raising their own children. They ask Nicias and Laches about the care of children. They turn to Nicias and Laches as men who have supervised the education of their own children. Melisias and Lysimachus do not want to be like other fathers who neglect their sons. Melisias and Lysimachus really want to care for their children. Even more, Melisias and Lysimachus admit that, unlike their own fathers, they have not achieved any greatness. They are ashamed of this failure. Of course, to admit such a failure cannot be a pleasant experience. Foucault stresses that, when Melisias and Lysimachus admit their shame, they are exhibiting courage. Melisias and Lysimachus have the courage to tell the truth. Thus, as Foucault says, “the themes of *epimeleia*, of the care one must have for children, and *parrêsia* [the courage of truth] are directly linked” (CT 132).

Second, based on his reading of the middle of the dialogue (CT 133–8; 181e–187d), Foucault claims that what is at issue in the *Laches* is “the very form one gives one’s life”: in other words, an ethics of life (CT 138, 144). After having agreed to be questioned (“the parrhesiastic pact par excellence” [CT 142]), Nicias warns Laches that “whatever subject you start with, [Socrates forces you] to let yourself be drawn by the discussion into giving an account of yourself, of the kind of life you lead now and have led in the past” (CT 143; 187e–188c). The account that Socrates demands is not the one a teacher or technician would give, stating who his own teachers were and what works he has accomplished. This account requires that one describe the relationship between oneself and the *logos*, the account of oneself (CT 144). It is not a question of competence but a question of how things stand with the *logos*. Can one give the *logos* of oneself? It is a question, as Foucault says, “of the way in which one lives” (CT 144). In the *Laches*, it is not the metaphysics of the soul, as we saw in the analysis of the *Alcibiades*, but the way in which one lives. Socrates’ discourse and *parrhêsia*, according to Foucault, focus on the mode

of existence. It is the style of life, the very form one gives to one's life that is at issue in the *Laches*.

In connection with this second, ethics-of-life point, Foucault determines another aspect of Socrates' persona. As we saw, he is not a prophet or a sage; he is not a rhetorician. Here we see, as we saw in the *Apology*, Socrates as the touchstone, the *basanos*. Socrates is the one who enables Laches, when he is being interrogated, to distinguish the good and the bad he has done in his life (CT 145). "So here we have," Foucault says, "the emergence of life, of the mode of life as the objective of Socrates' *parrhêsia* and discourse, of life in relation to which it is necessary to carry out an operation that will be a test, a testing, a sifting" (CT 145). And what authorizes Socrates to be the *basanos* for everyone and anyone (CT 146) is that, as Laches seems to indicate, Socrates' actions harmonize with his discourse. Socrates is different from most people, whose actions disagree with the opinion they give of themselves. Laches agrees to Socrates' interrogation because there a "symphony" between Socrates' discourse and his life (CT 148). As Foucault says, "free-spokenness hangs on the style of life" (CT 148). Of course, the style of one's life is developed through care. But the main point for Foucault is that here in the *Laches* we have "truly an ethical *parrêsia*" (CT 149).

The third point Foucault makes in his analysis of the *Laches* really concerns Socrates' persona as the touchstone (CT 149–53). At the conclusion of the dialogue, both Nicias and Laches admit that they have failed to define courage. Nicias and Laches, who are courageous in battle but also in discourse, are unable to provide an account of courage that leads to its basic truth—of what it is. However, Foucault points out that in this moment something else takes place that takes us beyond the failure to define courage. Because they have failed, Nicias and Laches suggest that they should return to their teachers for more lessons. This suggestion means that both Nicias and Laches rule themselves out as teachers. But then as they are about to leave, they give some advice to Lysimachus. Since both Nicias and Laches have failed to define courage, they tell Lysimachus that he should entrust his children to Socrates. Socrates will take care of them and improve them. After all, the care of the self is Socrates' mission, as we have seen in the analysis of the *Apology*. But here in the *Laches*, Socrates admits that he too has been unable to define courage. So Socrates suggests that all of them should go back to teachers. However, as Foucault points out, Socrates does not mean the teachers that are available for technical training, teachers who must be paid (CT 151). The true teacher is the *logos*, the discourse that will give you access to the truth. Since the true teacher is the *logos*, Socrates too must listen to it. It seems then that all five of them are on equal footing, needing to listen to the *logos*. Despite the apparent equality,

however, as Foucault argues, Socrates has a privileged position. Socrates is the one who guides the others toward the care of the self and the possibility of caring for themselves. Socrates is the one who guides others on the way of the *logos*. And finally, Socrates is the one who tests others to give an account of their lives. He is the touchstone, “who makes each person justify his life” (CT 153). For Foucault, Socrates’ principal role in the drama of ethics is as the *basanos*.

6 Conclusion: “Sacrifice a Cock to Asclepius”

We can summarize this long development in Foucault’s reception of Socrates in two ways. On the one hand we have seen a series of a set of characteristics for the care of the self and for speaking-frankly. First, we saw that there are three essential features of the care of the self: (1) it is an attitude toward oneself and others; (2) it is a conversion of the gaze from outside to inside; and (3) it consists in practices and exercise (*askêsis*). The exercises are at the heart of what Foucault call spirituality, which itself is defined by three characteristics: (1) the truth is never given to a subject by right; (2) the truth is earned by the work one does on oneself; and (3) the ensuing conversion results in the tranquility of the soul. Then we turned to speaking-frankly. Again we saw a triad of characteristics: (1) speaking-frankly is dangerous; (2) it is based in a pact or agreement; and (3) it is an exercise of freedom. Under the category of *parrhêsia*, we saw the persona of the parrhesiast distinguished from the prophet, the sage, the teacher, and, most importantly, the rhetorician. These distinctions led Foucault to Socrates’ persona as the touchstone. Within the context of the *Apology*, we saw three characteristics of Socrates’ artless truth-telling: (1) it uses the same form as everyday language; (2) it is spontaneous; and (3) in it the speaker says exactly what he thinks. These three characteristics, we saw, distinguish Socrates’ *parrhêsia* from rhetoric. It also allows the speech to be authentic, at once adequate to the truth and the speaker’s thoughts.

On the other hand, we have seen the analysis of three dialogues. Here are the main points in each dialogue. In Foucault’s analysis of the *Apology*, we saw that we are able to rescue the care of the self from self-knowledge by recognizing that Socrates “stings” others not to care for their wealth and reputation but to care for themselves. The care of the self is Socrates’ mission. With *parrhêsia*, we saw the shift from political veridiction to philosophical or ethical veridiction. In particular, we saw that Socrates adopts a specific relation to politics. He does not participate directly in politics, but from the outside of politics he performs actions that have an effect on politics. He is the agent of

truth. In the *Alcibiades*, Foucault sees the very emergence of the imperative to care for oneself. Nevertheless, with each recurrence of the Delphic motto of "know thyself" in the dialogue, we pass, according to Foucault, from care of the self to the soul as a metaphysical reality. Even if the soul in the *Alcibiades* is not conceived as substance, self-knowledge consists in knowing what is metaphysical or divine in one's soul, the reasoning part of the soul. The "great paradox of Platonism," according to Foucault, is that Platonism has generated the movement of spirituality, but it has also led to the movement of a rationality without any spirituality. Finally, in the *Laches*, Foucault claims that the themes of *epimeleia heautou* and *parrhêsia* are intertwined through Socrates' role as the touchstone. Socrates' discourse sifts out in the interlocutor the good actions he has performed from the bad actions. What is at issue in the *Laches* for Foucault is an ethics of life and not a metaphysics of the soul.

Although the interlocutors in the *Laches* agree to be questioned, although they are not angered by Socrates' questions—in the *Laches* it seems Socrates does not have to fear for his life—Foucault, in his analysis of the *Apology*, places the risk of life and death at the heart of the Socratic mission. The risk of death explains the time Foucault spends, over two lecture courses, analyzing the *Apology*. As we pointed out at the beginning, the *Apology* is one part of the cycle of dialogues on Socrates' death. In the *Apology*, Socrates accepts his death sentence. In the *Crito*, Socrates rejects Crito's argument that he should escape from Athens. And, in the *Phaedo*, as Foucault points out, we have Socrates' last words, after which Socrates says: "Sacrifice a cock to Asclepius" (CT 112). Asclepius is the god of medicine, the god to whom one sacrifices when one is sick or in gratitude for being cured. Socrates' final words have puzzled scholars for centuries: what illness was Socrates suffering from? Following Dumézil, Foucault stresses that the final words are addressed to Crito, which should refer us back to the *Crito* dialogue itself.¹⁶ There it seems Crito almost persuades Socrates to flee Athens. But in the end, Socrates argues that he must obey the laws of the city. Therefore both Crito and Socrates were cured of the illness of incorrect beliefs about the laws of the city. This "illness" is the one for which Socrates wants to make an offering to Asclepius. Foucault also stresses that after Socrates tells Crito at the end of the *Phaedo* to make the sacrifice, Socrates says, "don't be neglectful" (*mê amelêsête*) (CT 113). Etymologically, the word *amelêsête* belongs to the family of words around *epimeleia heautou* (CT 113). Thus, as Foucault concludes, "it is the principle of 'caring for oneself' that, beyond his death, [Socrates] bequeaths to others." This prescription is

16 Foucault discusses at length Dumézil's *The Riddle of Nostradamus* (1999). See Foucault 2011, 95–114.

Socrates' last will and testament: don't neglect yourself, take care of your self. As we saw, however, to care for oneself requires exercises that transform and convert yourself. Radical self-transformation is the essence of spirituality. Only through self-transformation do we have access to the truth. Therefore Foucault's own final words, words after which he will never speak again, are deeply connected to Socrates' final words: "there is no establishment of truth without an essential position of otherness; the truth is never the same; there can be truth only in the form of the other world and the other life" (CT 340). Therefore, like Socrates' *parrhêsia*, Foucault's own truth-telling, his last will and testament, urges you, all of us, to become other than ourselves.

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Socratic Voices in Derrida's Writing

Karel Thein

Socrates' presence on the last century's philosophical scene connects to three different issues: the priority of definition together with the practice of *elenchus*; the quest for self-knowledge which also translates into public truthfulness; and finally the elusive Socratic irony, which may be less central to Socrates as character in Plato's dialogues than it is often assumed.¹ All these issues have to do with the Socrates who "was the first to call philosophy down from the heavens and set her in the cities of men and bring her also into their homes and compel her to ask questions about life and morality and things good and evil."² Interpreters usually assume that the Socratic turn can be considered separately from Plato's metaphysics, and the reasons for this assumption are persuasive. Self-knowledge, truthfulness, and irony belong to philosophy understood as an effort to become a responsible human being; and this effort, rather than following from a particular doctrine, presupposes only a more general conception of man as perfectible by thinking. As for the priority of definition, the difference between its object and sensible particulars does not automatically confer to that object an ontological status irreducible to common predicates.³ Even the translation of the priority of definition into the highly intellectual Socratic morality does not necessarily imply separate moral

1 On this issue, see Lane 2011. Wolfsdorf 2007, reprinted with modifications in Wolfsdorf 2008, 242–60, distinguishes between verbal irony and situational irony, and provocatively denies that the former should be attributed to Socrates.

2 Cic. *Tusc.* 5.4.10–11 (tr. King 1945), elaborating upon Aristotle in *Metaph.* A.6 987b1–6 and *Part. an.* 1.1 642a28–31. Speaking about philosophy brought "in the cities of men" and "into their homes," Cicero implies that the Socratic practice of philosophy is simultaneously political and personal. See the final section of this chapter for the way Derrida's Socratic inspiration echoes this twofoldness. At the same time, Derrida's picture of Socrates is often closer to the latter's presentation in the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition. On this difference, see Laks 2018, 1 and 12: whereas the Socratic-Ciceronian conception of the Socratic turn in philosophy emphasizes a certain rupture (from which a new philosophy of man results), the Platonic-Aristotelian view accentuates a deeper continuity in the passage "from a philosophy of *things* to a philosophy of the *concept*" (italics Laks).

3 Here I rephrase Aristotle's objection to positing the objects of thought as separate Platonic forms. This general objection underlies various arguments in *Metaphysics* A.9 and receives an explicit elaboration in the so-called "Argument from Sciences" in Aristotle's *On Ideas* 79.3–80.6 (ed. Harlfinger in Leszl 1975).

Forms. All this enables us to agree that Platonic metaphysics is a step beyond the Socratic turn to philosophizing as a shared exercise of reason with deeply personal implications.

How does this situation reflect on the subject of this chapter, Jacques Derrida's recourse to Socrates? On the one hand, Derrida acknowledges that we cannot draw a neat line separating the originally Socratic method in the dialogues from Plato's use of Socrates as a mouthpiece for his own doctrines. On the other hand, he takes advantage of this difficulty to attract attention to what concerns all philosophy as theoretical activity. Derrida looks therefore to those situations, described in the dialogues, that remind us that the exercise of reason is something properly human and yet, in virtue of the reason's spontaneous nature, difficult to reduce to an application of self-transparent principles. As a result, instead of further separating Plato from the historical Socrates, Derrida's reading enables us to see Plato's own theory as an effort at giving the Socratic activity a firmer foundation: an effort that cannot avoid the risk of undermining some of that activity's guiding principles.

Derrida's meditation upon this risk seems therefore to proceed from the following question: granted that Plato's step beyond the historical Socrates is not *necessary* for making intelligible the latter's insistence on the priority of definition or his search for self-knowledge, in what sense is it still a non-contingent step that is *natural* to the human mind? Is this step not revelatory of the general structure of philosophy, where a Plato would lurk behind each Socrates?⁴ If we will see Derrida describe Socrates' activity as "the philosophy in him and beyond him" (Derrida 2002, 28), this chapter tries to demonstrate how this expression points to the philosophy's inherent need for thinking about its own limits—which, however, is often the first step toward transgressing them.

Here a caveat is in order: as I see it, this is what makes the figure of Socrates attractive to Derrida's more general worry about the misuse of reason based on its inherent tendency to form judgments in ignorance of its own limits. In connection with this Kantian streak of his thought, Derrida does not, however, claim to "overthrow the very idea that thought has reference to objects outside

4 It is through this question that Derrida's dealing with Socrates intersects with Foucault's otherwise entirely different interest in the Socratic practice of philosophy. See Lawlor (in this volume), 941, on the "major shift in the reorganization of ancient techniques of the care of the self," which occurred "somewhere between Socrates and Plato." See the last section of this chapter for some remarks on philosophy's Socratic voice and Derrida vs. Foucault. On the tension between writing and non-writing, see also Schur and Yamato (in this volume), 818, on Kierkegaard's reception of Socrates as "an attempt to confront the relationship between Socrates' unpublished investigations and their written aftermath."

of thought and language.”⁵ Even Hilary Putnam, who is the author of this criticism, would take for legitimate (albeit not necessarily true) the nominalist arguments in favor of objects that can only be found in thought and language—and so it would be more exact and prudent to say that Derrida, like Kant or many analytic philosophers, pays attention to the fact that the principles of various philosophical systems are presented *as if* they were fully real *and* graspable without any equivocation. As historically first of such systems, Platonism is a natural target of Derrida’s attention, including his interest in the way some of its tenets are put into the mouth of Socrates.

Still, Derrida’s polarizing style can irritate and I will try to avoid all its mannerisms. At the same time, this style is itself part of the main issue that Derrida treats in relation to Plato’s Socrates: the issue of speech and writing. In fact, paradoxically, no other recent author’s style gives so strong an impression of speech guiding and overpowering the writing, the latter being subjugated to the tone of a *voice*.⁶ I will touch upon this dimension of the relation between speech and writing later on, in connection with the picture of Socrates in Plato’s *Symposium*. Even then, however, a distance from Derrida’s voice or style will be observed so as to better elucidate the way he takes Plato’s Socrates to be symptomatic of broader philosophical issues without neglecting Socrates’ uniqueness as the source of his lasting non-dogmatic appeal.

To distinguish this chapter from the earlier literature on Derrida on Socrates, my intention is therefore to clarify the way the tension, obvious in Plato’s dialogues, between the pre-dogmatic Socratic stance and the Platonic metaphysics, is at work in Derrida’s own style of philosophical questioning. I hope to show how Derrida sees Plato’s Socrates as revelatory of the complicity between the personal and the impersonal elements in every exercise of the outwardly purified philosophical reason. This reading implies that Derrida, like Plato, is aware that this tension does not result from Socrates’ famous strangeness, but belongs to the nature of human reason and thus philosophy itself (not unlike Nietzsche and others, Derrida sees therefore Socrates as *exemplary* of the “Socratic” way of life). By the same token, Derrida’s interest in Socrates has a special place in his work since it reveals the stakes in his thinking

5 Putnam 2004, 117.

6 In this respect, Derrida could be criticized as succumbing to the power of a “metaphysical voice” as explained and opposed to the “ordinary voice” by Cavell 1994, 59–67. A markedly less charitable assessment of this power comes from Foucault, who sees Derrida’s way of reading philosophical texts as “a historically well-determined little pedagogy,” one giving “to the master’s voice the limitless sovereignty which allows it to restate the text indefinitely” (Foucault 1975, 27). The acerbity of this remark aside, the issue of “the master’s voice” merits our attention. See the last section of this chapter.

beyond its stylistic quirks and its juggling many apparently incompatible philosophical influences.

My aim is therefore not to offer an inventory of Derrida's references to Socrates.⁷ Instead, I will proceed in three steps corresponding to this chapter's three sections. The first one deals with Derrida's much commented upon reading of Plato's *Phaedrus* 274b–277a, where Socrates offers first a myth about the invention of writing, and then his exegesis of this myth which turns into a criticism of the nature of writing (or, more exactly, its lacking a nature). To make Derrida's reading of this text fully intelligible, I will pay attention to the underlying tension between the Socratic *elenchus* as activity and the building up of a system. From this perspective, Derrida himself oscillates between a systematic treatment of speech and writing on the one hand, and the Socratic practice of refutation on the other. Turning to the motivation for that elenctic activity, the second section takes a look at the treatment of the *Apology of Socrates* in "Plato's Pharmacy." Here Socrates' intimate voice or *daimonion* comes to the foreground and reminds us that the *elenchus* unfolds simultaneously on the private and the public plane. It is therefore no accident that Socrates' personal and philosophical story gets him involved with political life. This section will stress that, for Plato and Derrida alike, Socrates' speeches in the *Apology* are of a piece with the rejection of logography in the *Phaedrus*, and that the *elenchus*, for all its aiming at definition, is linked by Socrates himself to conscience as a voice of which, on Derrida's reading, Socrates claims to be both an agent and an instrument. In a similar vein, the third section attends to the persistence of voice behind the written word. It starts with a brief reminder of Socratic echoes in Derrida's polemic with Foucault's remarks on the Greek *logos*, a polemic centered around the pedagogical power of the voice and its importance to the master-disciple relation. With this background in mind, this section turns to Plato's *Symposium*, where Socrates borrows Diotima's voice and Alcibiades describes Socrates' own discourse as a power efficacious not only beyond the speech-writing dichotomy but beyond the presence of Socrates himself. This description has an obvious pedagogical

7 Derrida's various mentions of Socrates differ widely in the degree of engagement with the original Platonic dialogues. I will naturally focus on those texts that deal with the tension between Socratic speech and Platonic writing. For reasons of space I will leave aside Derrida's treatment, in "Double Session" (published together with "Plato's Pharmacy" in Derrida 1981), of the description of the soul as a book in *Philebus* 38e–39c. Compared to "Plato's Pharmacy," on which see below, this treatment is closer to the general issues discussed in Derrida 1997. Derrida's epistolary musings on the Socrates-Plato relationship in *The Post Card* (Derrida 1979b) are more baroque but less innovative concerning the Plato-Socrates relationship than the texts discussed below.

dimension and I intend to show that Derrida's portrayal of Socrates is *also* an espousal of this power of voice. It is the latter, even in its written form, that provides philosophy's theoretical core with its unavoidable and fundamentally practical complement, a personal dimension.

1 "Plato's Pharmacy": Alphabet and Voice as Signs of the Soul

Before we open the *Phaedrus* with "Plato's Pharmacy" alongside it, we need to put the latter in perspective. First, Derrida's practice of reading exemplifies a philosophical alertness to the common assumption that, when we say something, whether aloud, to ourselves, or in writing, we say what we mean and we mean what we say. In this respect, "Plato's Pharmacy" stands close to some analytic philosophers, even if Derrida's dealing with this assumption is more traditional and (ironically enough) systematic. Second, this systematic nature is due to the fact that Derrida's writing keeps focusing on the historical unfolding of metaphysics starting with Plato and Aristotle. This explains his attention to the smallest textual detail, equivocations in which are read as symptoms of a much larger and not entirely historical condition of metaphysics. The result is naturally awkward insofar as it is at once extremely and hardly context-sensitive. Derrida recurs, in his reading of the *Phaedrus*, to the same view of Platonism that he expresses in *Voice and Phenomenon* and *Grammatology*. On the doctrinal level, this view conforms to the criticism of Platonic Forms that we find in Aristotle's early *On Ideas*: our use of common concepts as unities expressed in language does not compel us to transform such concepts into the eternal and separate universals or Forms.

Besides this criticism there is, however, something else at work in "Plato's Pharmacy" and elsewhere in Derrida: as reader of both Plato and Kant, he is interested less in *how* the conversion of common concepts into Forms proceeds on the argumentative level than in *why* it occurs in the first place. Like Kant, Derrida detects here the incurable tendency of human reason to transcend its legitimate boundaries. Still like Kant, he also assumes that this tendency is beyond repair in the sense that it could only be abandoned, which will not (and, all thing considered, *should not*) happen. Seen in this light, the driving force of Derrida's early work up to *Dissemination* is the curiosity about the way the self-transcending tendency of reason projects itself into various systems of philosophy starting with Platonism. The latter is not a historical accident even if its successive expressions, in all their unavoidable detail, are historically contingent.

All this is why Derrida's analyses of Husserl or Rousseau present us with repeating patterns traceable to what Plato was the first to write down: while Husserl may well oppose "a conventional Platonism," his own conception of ideality is still "reawakening the originary decision of philosophy in its Platonic form" (Derrida 2010, 45). Similarly, when he opposes a natural writing engraved in a human heart to the dead letter of writing in the strict sense, Rousseau "repeats the Platonic gesture" and identifies the natural voice with "the Platonic writing of the truth in the soul" (Derrida 1997, 15–18). At this point, Derrida finds a complicity between the assumption of pure interiority and the birth of metaphysics—or, at least, the birth of its branch which will be later labelled "special metaphysics."⁸ Once Plato describes the soul or reason as a special agent different from all physical agents, it is only natural that this agent, in its hypothetical purity, turns towards the equally pure and non-material objects of thought. This correlation is pointed out repeatedly by Socrates in the dialogues, most notoriously in the *Phaedo* and *Republic* 5. However, even in these dialogues, the *objects* of thought require a supplementary explanation of the very *activity* of thinking and of the nature of what does the thinking in the first place. The writing of the truth in the soul not only implies an inner agent whose life cannot be explained by reference to bodily substance. It is also keen to unfold into a discourse which reveals the active yet invisible self by clothing it in a host of images. Of course we should take the latter for improper and metaphorical but, without them, almost nothing can be said about the soul as something which spontaneously executes the acts of thinking and cannot be reduced to just "one thought after another."

Here I am already paraphrasing the *Phaedrus* and Socrates' distinction between the "states and actions" of the soul, which constitute its ever mobile nature (245c2–246a2), and the soul's "idea," which Socrates presents by means of an image (246a3–6). This need for an image, moreover a composite one (the soul's three parts will be imagined as two horses and a charioteer), echoes Socrates' earlier musing on his lack of self-knowledge and the way he describes his possible selves as bestial or divine (229e4–230a6).⁹ At the same time, the complexity of this image contrasts with the previous and direct account of the soul's "nature" (*phusis*), which relies on the soul's self-motion and enables Socrates to make an important distinction between animate and inanimate bodies. It is this distinction that will be used, almost thirty pages later, to distinguish between the good and the bad writing: the former

⁸ On special metaphysics and general metaphysics, see Vollrath 1962.

⁹ For more on self-knowledge in the *Phaedrus*, see Moore 2014 and 2015, 136–84.

occurs in the soul and connects to our internally animated body; the latter is externally applied on an inanimate support. An obvious methodological continuity therefore connects Socrates' view of the soul's nature to his exegesis of the myth about the invention of writing. Derrida's interpretation does not interrupt this continuity. Instead, it takes it seriously and ponders the possible equivocations that it introduces into Socrates's account of writing as an image rather than something with its own nature. Hence we must address three questions to both Socrates and Derrida: are the images *written in the soul* animate? And, if so, does it mean that the writing in the soul is the soul's *natural* ingredient? And, finally, is this natural ingredient what enables the soul both to reveal and to obscure itself in its construed *external* verbal image or "idea"?

The opposition between the animate (*empsychon*) and the inanimate (*apsuchon*) forms the background of the whole discussion of writing from the moment that Phaedrus recalls Lysias' being chastised as a logographer, a hired author of speeches to be delivered by another person (257c4–6). The context is political and it is Phaedrus who believes that the author of written speeches is despised by the politicians who avoid writing for fear of being scorned by posterity on the basis of their writing. Socrates, in contrast, rejects the idea that to write (*graphein*) is inherently bad and is perceived as such: the real difference consists in whether one writes beautifully or disgracefully (258d4–7). What Socrates means by "beautifully" (*kalôs*) will be further clarified by his recommendation that a speech should be composed after the pattern of a living being: it should be like (*hôsper*) an animal (264c2–6). The comparison to a living being is important as it points back to what animates the motion of a beautiful speech, be it a written or a spoken one. Derrida's comments do not engage this issue directly but use these passages to elaborate upon the intuition that, precisely like every animal, every speech (*logos*) must have its "father." Hence the summarizing statement: "Like any person, the *logos-zôon* has a father." And then, immediately, a question: "But what is a father?" (Derrida 1981, 80).

This sudden "what is X?" question, which shows how narrow a line divides Derrida's inquisitive Socratic streak from his more rhetorical leaning, leads Derrida to delve into the metaphorical nature of the "father" of speech, and to wonder about the metaphoricity of the Good's role as "father" of the Sun. This development, however, obscures an equally pertinent question concerning the features of personhood that can rub onto a speech. This question, formulated with more flourish and less directly, emerges only once Derrida starts paying attention to Socrates' story about the invention

of writing and, more importantly still, to Socrates' interpretation of that story.¹⁰

The story or "myth" is introduced in order to help us to answer the *double* question of whether it is apt or inept to write, and what makes writing good or inept. As it is clear that this second question makes sense only if we allow that some writing *could* be good, we would expect Socrates to come up with a criterion enabling us to separate good writing from the bad. Instead, we are treated to an ancient and unwritten rumor (*akoê*) about writing's invention, once upon a time, in Egypt. The scope of this rumor is surprisingly narrow: the only stated aim of the inventor, the god Theuth, is to offer "a remedy for memory and wisdom" (274e6–7). Thamus, a superior god who judges Theuth's inventions, then raises his objection, whose core anticipates Aristotle's distinguishing, throughout his *On Memory and Recollection*, between memory as a record and recollection as activity: to trust inanimate writing will impair human capacity for active recollection. The alleged remedy is therefore a poison causing forgetfulness and substituting the appearance of wisdom for wisdom itself (275a2–b3).¹¹

The moral of Socrates' story is therefore meant to be independent of the actual form of Egyptian writing, let alone the historical circumstances of its invention.¹² The same holds for Socrates' presentation of Theuth in the

10 Regarding this story, I will again focus on what I take for pertinent to Derrida's relation to Socrates, even if the latter is, for him, always the Socrates of Plato. For other perspectives on this crucial part of "Plato's Pharmacy" see Brague 1973; Neel 1988; Gaudin 1989; Rinon 1992 and 1993; Naas 2003, 3–21, and 2010. On Derrida's reading of the *Phaedrus* and his other engagements with ancient philosophy, see Naas 2014. On "Plato's Pharmacy" in its time and place, see Leonard 2005, 189–215. Among the interpretations of the *Phaedrus* on writing, Ferrari 1987, 204–32, still stands out by its subtlety and clarity.

11 On the myth of Theuth, see Moore 2012. Were we to focus more closely on how Plato deals with written record and memory, we would discover the ramifications of this issue in the *Timaeus*, where rumor and archive simultaneously oppose and collaborate: we learn about how the Egyptian priests, archivists of the word, wrote down a rumor about the perfect ancient city of Athens, a rumor that the *Timaeus* returns to the present day Greece (25d7–e5). This rumor offers a mirror of human and political origins, which needs to be framed by a new cosmology *told* as a story by Timaeus and *recorded* in the eponymous dialogue. Thanks to this frame and to the Egyptian writing, Athens will find its place in a sort of universal history. As we shall immediately see, the *Phaedrus* shows no interest in this perspective.

12 I will follow Socrates in not worrying about the hieroglyphs and their difference from the phonetic alphabet. Derrida himself sees this Socratic perspective on writing as akin to the later and largely Hegelian assumption that the hieroglyphs can be subsumed under the *general* category of writing of which alphabetic writing is both a summary and a

Philebus (18b6–d3). In this second Egyptian story, he is “some god or perhaps some divine human being” who not only noticed that voice was of an unlimited variety, but was the first to realize that this variety can be divided into—that is, distributed among—determinate units or vowels. He then proceeded to identify a number of other “noises” besides the vowels, and to established the so-called “mutes.” By means of further subdivisions, he finally arrived at a determinate number of units or elements corresponding to letters. What results from Theuth’s insight and the overall division of vocal sound is thus an alphabet which is ready to be used as the basis of alphabetic writing, whose particular signs need not be images of things. In fact, the less they resemble particular things, the better they represent them in various contexts.

It is clearly with the *Philebus* in mind that Derrida reads the story from the *Phaedrus* and extends the scope of its interpretation well beyond the issue of memory and recollection. In this, he takes his cue from Socrates whose own interpretation of the Egyptian story aims at distinguishing between, as we know already, the inanimate written word, which is incapable of its own activity, and the good inscription in the living soul, an integral part of the process of learning about justice, beauty, and goodness (*Phdr.* 275c6–277a4). This way of distinguishing between a bad and a good writing contains no direct answer to the *practical* question whether one *should* write: it promotes dialectical exchange as a means of attaining the truth but, on a closer look, it does not reject good writing. Instead, it puts writing in the legitimate service of truth, the latter being the object of inquiry. This is why Socrates’ moral of the tale is more ambivalent than we could have expected: he speaks about knowing the truth concerning what one “speaks or writes *about*” (277b5–6), and concludes that those who can defend their written speeches, poems, or laws by showing, in discussion, that their writings point towards truth merit the name of philosophers (278b8–d6). For Socrates, the author’s personal qualities are what ultimately determine the success of the written text: they empower the latter to withstand efforts at its refutation or *elenchus*.

In contrast, and this is an *epistemological* question, we are not told whether the knowledge one wishes to impart can be fully expressed in articulate propositions and, as such, written down. In any case, even if speech could only indicate some more fundamental insight into the nature of things, nothing should preclude a well-written text from having the same effect. That this is true is largely guaranteed by the original connection, made explicit in the *Philebus*, between writing and the phonetic alphabet. It is this connection that

peak. On the Greeks and the hieroglyphs, see Frankfurter 1994; Vasunia 2001, 136–82. For a variety of perspectives on Greeks and writing, see Detienne 1988.

enables Derrida to leave the question of the father as person momentarily aside and ask instead about the proximity of alphabetic writing to the very activity of articulate thinking. What this question aims at is the necessary linguistic articulation of all communicable thought—an articulation that must also be at work in recollecting as discussed in the *Phaedrus*.

This is a fairly simple, philosophically central question which, in the spirit of Socrates, aims at what is universal and not confined to the limits of Platonic dialogues. It is therefore unsurprising that Derrida deals with this question in various texts, including its most detailed treatment in *Grammatology*. Since I must leave aside things that happen in his extended field, including the analyses of Condillac and Rousseau on writing, or the reflections on hieroglyphs and power in “Scribble” (Derrida 1979a), I would only emphasize Derrida's attention to Hegel's view of alphabetic writing as the supreme form of recording the process of thinking. In “The Pit and the Pyramid,” which can be read as a companion piece to “Plato's Pharmacy,” Derrida quotes and comments upon Hegel's appreciation of alphabetic writing as leading the mind away from concrete or hieroglyphic images and “to the inward realm of mental life” without dissolving the exactness of names as signs for exact ideas. In a way, it is alphabetic writing that best connects the consciousness to ideas *of things*. Hegel, however, is aware that a purely phonetic writing is a teleological ideal distinct from the actual practice of writing, which must have room for punctuation, figures, and spacing.¹³ For Derrida, these “operative silences of alphabetic writing” have a universal implication which therefore applies, without any anachronism, to the *Phaedrus*: just as there is no actually pure phonetic writing, there is no self-sufficient, untainted interiority. We, just like Socrates or any other “father” of the speech, deal only with the *signs* of such pure yet living interiority, while our own consciousness constantly negotiates its identity with the ideas of things. The Platonic soul may well be invisible but Plato keeps describing its life in spatial terms which project it into the material cosmos. A reader of Plato may well know that she should think about the soul as reaching beyond this spatiality, but she still follows Socrates who cannot account for the soul's “idea” without relying on its image. The soul, which for Socrates is both the gate to and the object of the desired self-knowledge, does not reveal itself without some impure exteriority of which the Platonic writing is a marvelous example.

If, for Derrida, the teleological accounts of self-consciousness and of a purely phonetic writing tend to coincide, it is also because these accounts try

13 Derrida 1982, esp. 94–101. On Hegel's view of speech and writing, see at least Vernon 2007, 66–72; on Derrida and Hegel on this issue, see Stähler 2003.

to supersede all sorts of stories and histories, large and small, including the perhaps accidental and certainly political variety of the systems of writing. From this perspective, we find a similar metaphysical drive in Plato and Hegel; but, in both cases, we also find a similar resistance that we can label “Socratic.” The same quite clearly holds true for Derrida himself, the difference consisting in his refusal to transform even the systematic drive into a true system. In this sense, Derrida’s Socratic streak prevails. Playing Platonic idioms and doctrines against each other, scrutinizing the analogies and metaphors that sustain them throughout the dialogues, “Plato’s Pharmacy” often borrows Socrates’ voice in its inquisitive, elenctic tone. While scrutinizing Plato’s dialogues, Derrida therefore assumes that this voice survives in different philosophical styles, not only because style reflects personhood, but also because the Socratic voice—not unlike the elenctic activity as such—cannot be appropriated to Plato’s, or any other, metaphysics.

This irreducibility of the inquiring voice to system will not surprise any careful reader of the dialogues. Take, for instance, the variety of philosophic natures and their approaches to knowledge in the *Republic*, with Socrates discussing them all while standing apart from both the natural yet rough philosophical talents and the highly trained professionals who would govern the best city. Here as elsewhere, Socrates’ uniqueness only highlights how difficult it is to move from the dialogue as philosophical conversation, which strives to steer the soul of amateurs like Phaedrus, to the precise and determinate dialectic method.¹⁴ Such a move always contains awkward steps in the introduction of premises for further argumentation. However, if Derrida is adept at detecting these less mobile joints in the living body of speech, he is equally skillful at pushing the text one step further in the direction of the system. He shows how Plato cuts the criticized writing from its author’s *personal* authority in order to appeal to the higher and *impersonal* authority of truth. Does this mean that Platonism as a system can use this higher authority to legitimize the criticism of the bad and soulless writing? Not really; the dialogues themselves testify to the fact that writing can surprise the prepared soul with an authentically Socratic spark. Such a spark, however, is also a warning against the power of words to drive us away from what we still believe we are talking about. Derrida’s rather Socratic suspicion is therefore not that language cannot reach a mind-independent reality, but that it leads us there by many detours that like to dress up as systematic shortcuts.

14 Concerning the *Republic*, see Weiss 2012 on Socrates’ differences from both “philosophers by nature” and “philosophers by design.” On the mostly pedagogical aim of conversation in the *Phaedrus*, see Long 2013, 11–25.

Insisting on the spread of the Platonic system beyond what the dialogues say and what metaphors they use, Derrida therefore retains the Socratic capacity to show that naïveté and sophistication, far from opposing each other, go easily together. It is after all their collusion that motivates Socrates repeatedly to attack the “experts.” Derrida’s version of this attack (“so you think you really know what your words imply?”) may be too ornate for its own good, but it is revelatory precisely because it shares in the ambivalence it exposes: it projects onto the dialogue a certain structure of writing, neither good nor bad, all the while unmasking this structure as a possible blueprint for Platonism which can then graft its distinction between the good and the bad *upon it*.¹⁵ Even for Derrida, the only true presence, which guarantees the success of this grafting, is therefore less the alleged metaphysical presence of some ultimate meaning or Form (which he rejects), than the activity of a Socratic voice. It is the latter that is intermittently reenacted by Derrida who, rather like Socrates, tends to say “always the same things about the same things” (*Grg.* 490e9–11; *Xen. Mem.* 4.4.6).

Whether these “same things” are human affairs or the eternally self-identical entities treated by philosophy alone is, in some instances, not easy to decide. I will therefore leave the systematic drive to Platonism aside so as to focus, in the next two sections, on the Socrates whose actions, as portrayed by Plato, belong among the images of soul. I assume that these written images relate to the “idea” of soul and, as such, have to do with the issue of good writing and bad writing as characterized by the presence or the absence of life. And if Derrida recalls, in connection with the *Phaedrus* on writing, the difficulty of drawing a line between what is and is not “alive” (Derrida 1997, 37), he may again have taken his cue from Socrates. To highlight this connection, I will briefly consider two descriptions of Socrates’ philosophical activity: one that Socrates himself offers in the *Apology*, and one that Plato puts in the mouth of Alcibiades in the *Symposium*.

15 See, for instance, Derrida 1981, 149: “It is later confirmed that the conclusion of the *Phaedrus* is less a condemnation of writing in the name of present speech than a preference for one sort of writing over another, for the fertile trace over the sterile trace, for a seed that engenders because it is planted inside over a seed scattered wastefully outside: at the risk of *dissemination*. This, at least, is presumed by that. Before trying to account for this in terms of the general structure of Platonism, let us follow this movement.” On dialectics and truth, see also Derrida 1981, 154–5 and 166–7.

2 The *Apology of Socrates* and the Motivation of Elenchus

In “Privilege,” where he deals with philosophical education and the politics that surrounds it, Derrida quotes and briefly comments upon the report, by Diogenes Laertius (2.40–1), of Lysias’ offer to an indicted Socrates of his professional speech-writing services. Socrates rejects Lysias’ written speech as “more forensic than philosophical” and “not suitable” for him. Wondering how a fine speech could not suit anyone, Lysias receives a prompt reply: “Well, would not fine clothes and fine shoes be just as unsuitable to me?”

The story sounds too good to be true: it looks tailor-made to illustrate the conversation in the *Phaedrus*, where Lysias’ speeches are criticized as ready-made instruments lacking their own soul. What is interesting, however, is that Socrates turns Lysias down by referring both to philosophy in general and to himself in particular. A close connection between Socrates and philosophy is brought out throughout the dialogues, and we are accustomed to it. Still, that such a connection exists is strange: philosophy, all the more so a philosophy which strives for definition and scrutinizes all personal beliefs, should *not* have a special affiliation to any one man. In his comment upon Diogenes’ anecdote, Derrida suggests that

he seems to imply that what was unsuitable, even unseemly, discordant, for Socrates, was an apology too concerned with right (with juridical wrangling, *dikanikos*, legalist or legitimist ratiocination), when a more properly philosophical defense would have been necessary, that is, a defense better suited to what Socrates was and said, more in tune with the “business of philosophy,” with the philosophy in him and beyond him, responding and corresponding to the voice, to the sign (*sêmeion*) that spoke in him like an innate, natural demon to make of him the philosopher he was destined to be.

DERRIDA 2002, 28

This, of course, is an interpretation based on a certain reading of the *Apology* whose heart would consist in a unique pairing of two natures, Socrates’ and philosophy’s. This pairing shows in the way Plato gives the trial of Socrates a written form whose dramatic dimension incorporates the outcome of the trial as the first step towards Socrates’ death at the hands of the city, but whose properly philosophical aim is to make the unique voice of Socrates survive in good philosophical writing. Following in Plato’s steps, Derrida’s reading of the *Apology* is thus directly based on the way Plato’s Socrates paints his activity in front of his judges. Derrida, however, tones up Socrates’ inner voice by

presenting it as an *active* cause of his becoming a particular kind of philosopher or, more exactly, a unique philosopher. Derrida's expression, "the philosophy in him and beyond him," describes therefore Socrates' reaction to that "voice": an interpretation that seems to take rather lightly the fact that this inner voice always and only prevents Socrates from doing something, but never proposes what to do.¹⁶ Is Derrida reading too much into this largely prohibitive power?

Since the quoted comment is brief, we could answer this question in different ways, for instance by supplementing it by views taken from the ancient discussion about Socrates' inner voice: is it in fact Socrates' intellect (*nous*) or rather, as Plutarch later argues, a demon that comes to him from the outside?¹⁷ The safest option, however, is to focus on the *Apology*, not in the least because it plays its role in "Plato's Pharmacy" and its narration connects the *daimonion* with both the Delphic oracle about Socrates and the latter's knowledge of his own ignorance. Importantly, it is only during his trial that Socrates speaks about his inner voice in front of a large audience—which, by definition, cannot hear it.

Hence the first surprising feature of Socrates self-presentation: his intimate voice is what the Athenians have heard about many times (31c7–d2); in contrast, the oracle concerning Socrates has evidently been unknown to the judges and is only now revealed (20e3–8). So if Socrates says that the god at Delphi will be his witness, we still have only Socrates' word as he reports what his friend Chaerephon asked the oracle and what it replied: "he asked if any man was wiser than I, and the Pythian replied that no one was wiser" (21a6–7). To which Socrates' reaction is: "Whatever does the god mean? What is his riddle? I am very conscious that I am not wise at all; what then does he mean by saying that I am the wisest? For surely he does not lie; it is not legitimate for him to do so" (21b3–6).¹⁸

Even on Socrates' own account, the oracle does not exactly say that he is *the wisest*; it says that no one is *wiser*, perhaps so as to indicate that all human beings, Socrates included, are fools. Thanks to his use of the superlative, however, Socrates can appeal to the oracle in order to justify his elenctic activity. But this appeal has its stranger side since Socrates claims that this

16 Here I limit myself to Plato's Socrates, supposing that Derrida does the same. In Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.4, Socrates' divine signs can also tell him what to do and thus change his intentions in a different way. Speaking about the *Apology* without further qualification, I therefore mean the one written by Plato.

17 On this discussion in the context of the long evolution of the notion of *daimon*, see Timotin 2012. For a variety of interpretations of Socrates' *daimonion* and for further references, see Destrée and Smith 2005, and also Bussanich 2013 and McPherran 2013.

18 I quote the *Apology*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Symposium* in the next section from Cooper 1997.

activity is aimed at the oracle itself.¹⁹ He intends to refute *the oracle*, which may not be the most prudent defense against the charge of impiety:

For a long time I was at a loss as to his [sc. god's] meaning; then I very reluctantly turned to some such investigation as this; I went to one of those reputed wise, thinking that there, if anywhere, I could refute the oracle (*elegxôn to manteion*) and say to it: "This man is wiser than I, but you said I was."

Pl. *Ap.* 21b–c

What follows is a well-known story: the reputedly wise man turns out not to be wise at all, and so Socrates continues his elenctic tour around Athens, rebutting the purported wisdom of politicians, poets, and craftsmen. Still, Socrates' motivation as so construed does not account for his philosophical activity from the time *before* the oracle, which incited Chaerephon to go to Delphi in the first place. Socrates himself does not clarify this puzzle and only describes the general public's misunderstanding of his elenctic activity that led to him being accused of propounding an impious natural philosophy and being a sophist (see 19b4–c1). This present and written accusation, a *graphê* deposited by Meletus, is therefore only a crystallization of the ancient and unwritten rumors about Socrates. And it is to invalidate these rumors that Socrates reveals the Delphic origin of his recent and present mission.

It is therefore against the newly focused version of the ancient and vague rumors about Socrates that the latter appeals to the oracle in order to give his activity a higher justification. And while he keeps insisting on his humble status and "only human" wisdom, he also paints himself as god's unique gift to the city (30e2–31a7; cf. *Tht.* 150d8–9 on Socrates as god's maieutic collaborator). As a result, we get not only the polarity between the innate "daemonic voice" and the oracle that came from Delphi, but a variety of divine nudges all addressed to Socrates: the mission of questioning those who believe themselves wise "has, as I say, been enjoined upon me by the god, by means of oracles and dreams, and in every other way that a divine manifestation has ever ordered a man to do anything" (33c4–7).

Left unexplained, this statement is only the last in a series of steps which end up blurring the dividing lines between the old and the new, the private and the public, the human and the divine. Describing himself as a god-given example

19 This explicit statement is somehow ignored by most commentators. Among exceptions are Burnet 1924, 172 (Socrates tried "to prove the god a liar"); Nehamas 1986, 305–6; Miller 2010, 339.

or *paradeigma* in the sense of a mirror of human ignorance (23a7–b4), Socrates appropriates the status of the humblest yet somehow the most powerful of men.²⁰ This ambivalent appropriation is what makes Socrates, who is both unique and exemplary, match Derrida's picture of philosophy as activity. In "Plato's Pharmacy," Derrida's focus is precisely on Socrates' self-description as a divine gift, a description that accompanies his warning to the Athenians that, in sentencing him to death, they will suffer the greater harm. Derrida quotes the lines 30c–31b and concludes that "what pushes Socrates to take the place of the father or elder brother toward the Athenians—a role in which he, too, will have to be replaced—is a certain voice." Socrates, "like the good horse in the *Phaedrus*," obeys the voice that steers him by preventing certain actions and thus, implicitly, encouraging others. For Derrida, this intimate voice is *logos* which comes from the divine source so that god can be understood as its father. God is therefore the father of an unwritten *logos*. And it is from the latter's perspective that Plato's filial writing, letting the now dead Socrates speak, is "in the situation of writing as it is indicted in the *Phaedrus*" (Derrida 1981, 147–148).

Simply put, Plato writes against the written accusation of Socrates, and he does so in the latter's absence. This situation is contingent insofar as Socrates *could have* been acquitted, but also necessary since Plato, regardless of the particular circumstances, intends to keep alive the filial-like connection between god, philosophy, and city. Writing the *Apology* as an elaborate drama with Socrates cast as the god's son and the city's father, Plato is searching for the *good* writing, which would carry on Socrates' voice as both personally inspired and impartially logical. In this sense, Platonism plays out like a "family scene" (Derrida 1981, 167) which, of course, does not detract from its philosophical seriousness. After all, Plato replays the family scene in a tighter philosophical circle in the *Phaedo*, starting with Simmias' fear that with Socrates dead no one will be able to properly philosophize (76c) and ending with Phaedo's avowal that, at the moment of Socrates' death, "we all felt as if we had lost a father and would be orphaned for the rest of our lives" (116a–b). The same dialogue also contains Socrates' extended comparison between arguments and human beings (89d–91c), which would nicely frame Derrida's understanding of philosophy as profoundly social activity irreducible to purely formal argumentation let alone solitary meditation.

Here we need to bear in mind that Derrida's reading of Plato, just like his reading of Aristotle, Hegel, or Husserl, does not concern itself with the origin of philosophy, nor exactly with its history, but with its structure. In

20 For the interpretation of Socrates as a proactive *paradeigma* or an example to follow, see Destrée 2005, 74–7.

this respect, Derrida is attracted by the metaphysical tradition that hangs the structure of philosophy on transcendental hooks that, on his own account, need constant checking and balancing but cannot be simply removed—our mind would replace them with structurally similar conceptual structures. In this larger picture, Plato's Socrates is important for two opposite reasons: on the one hand, he fits the dialogical framework of philosophy as exercised in the company of his interlocutors since he has no pretense of autarchy and is dependent on other speakers as his fellow human beings;²¹ on the other hand, the same Socrates repeatedly steps out of this framework in virtue of his eccentric position that enables him to propose new hypotheses to be tested in conversation. Socrates' strangeness is therefore not psychological and, not unlike Hegel, Derrida sees Socrates as incarnating a historically new yet henceforth universal self-reflecting stance: with Socrates, philosophy not only starts to talk in the first person, but also to address its second-person interlocutors. The dialogue is therefore at the heart of a new intellectual enterprise open toward all future doctrinal developments. It is not simply one form of philosophical writing among others, but a form exemplary of a truly subjective stance that both conditions and complements philosophy's power of taking into account the knower together with the known.²² It is through Socrates and his elenctic mission that philosophy, a work of the intellect, starts to talk to itself without turning a deaf ear to what anyone has to say as a person.

3 The *Symposium* and the Philosophy “in and beyond” Socrates

If, reading the above-quoted anecdote from Diogenes Laertius, Derrida says that Socrates has “philosophy in him and beyond him,” he seems to point towards the (almost Hegelian) union of subjectivity with non-arbitrary conscience. The Socratic *elenchus* is exercised only in the presence of others, but free from all constraints of social status: no one is immune to the questioning of which Socrates claims to be both an agent and an instrument. In this context, and before turning to the *Symposium* as my last example of Platonic writing, it may therefore be illuminating to recall what Derrida seems to have understood as his own Socratic episode: an encounter with authority, with the wise master's voice that he nevertheless feels obliged to question and contradict.

This episode, a lecture on Foucault's *History of Madness* with Foucault present in the auditorium, was published as “Cogito and the History of Madness”

21 On this lack of autarchy as specific to Plato's Socrates, see Dorion 2010.

22 On Hegel and Socrates, see White 2006 and Bowman (in this volume).

in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* in 1963, and reprinted in *Writing and Difference* (Derrida 1978). Since its first publication, it has contained the following introductory footnote:

With the exception of several notes and a short passage (in brackets), this paper is the reproduction of a lecture given 4 March 1963 at the Collège Philosophique. In proposing that this text be published in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, M. Jean Wahl agreed that it should retain its first form, that of the spoken word (*la parole vive*), with all its requirements and, especially, its particular weaknesses: if in general, according to the remark in the *Phaedrus*, the written word is deprived of “the assistance of its father,” if it is a fragile “idol” fallen from “living and animated discourse” unable to “help itself,” then is it not more exposed and disarmed than ever when, miming the improvisation of the voice, it must give up even the resources and lies of style?

DERRIDA 1978, 389–390

Three years before he publishes “Plato's Pharmacy,” Derrida inscribes here his voice in its future tenet, with an explicit stress on the Platonic difference between the orphaned written word and the internally animate speech, which thrives in the dialogical element. At the same time, Derrida assumes that this difference is not an unbridgeable polarity—and a similar view can be detected later in the text when he opposes Foucault's remarks on “the Greek *logos*” and its relation to irrationality. But, first, this is what Derrida says on the occasion of standing up to his master, the author of the *History of Madness*:

This book, admirable in so many respects, powerful in its breadth and style, is even more intimidating for me in that, having formerly had the good fortune to study under Michel Foucault, I retain the consciousness of an admiring and grateful disciple. Now, the disciple's consciousness, when he starts, I would not say to dispute, but to engage in dialogue with the master or, better, to articulate the interminable and silent dialogue which made him into a disciple—this disciple's consciousness is an unhappy consciousness. Starting to enter into dialogue in the world, that is, starting to answer back, he always feels “caught in the act,” like the “infant” who, by definition and as his name indicates, cannot speak and above all must not answer back. And when, as is the case here, the dialogue is in danger of being taken—incorrectly—as a challenge, the disciple knows that he alone finds himself already challenged by the master's voice within him that precedes his own. He feels himself indefinitely

challenged, or rejected or accused; as a disciple, he is challenged by the master who speaks within him and before him, to reproach him for making this challenge and to reject it in advance, having elaborated it before him; and having interiorized the master, he is also challenged by the disciple that he himself is. This interminable unhappiness of the disciple perhaps stems from the fact that he does not yet know—or is still concealing from himself—that the master, like real life, may always be absent. The disciple must break the glass, or better the mirror, the reflection, his infinite speculation on the master. And start to speak.

DERRIDA 1978, 36

While confirming that Derrida's Socrates is also a Hegelian Socrates infected with the master-slave dialectics (which is nowhere more apparent than in Socrates' dialogue with his judges in the *Apology*, where the power over life and death is not only unequally distributed but also differently understood), these words operate in an authentically Socratic mode when they derive the status of disciple less from an external authority than from the dialogical structure: it is "the interminable and silent dialogue" which made Derrida into a disciple in the first place, a dialogue with "the master's voice within him that precedes his own." The expression "within him and before him," which describes the voice of the master and its efficiency in the disciple's soul, has an uncanny resemblance to the words "in him and beyond him," which Derrida will use to characterize Socrates' relation to philosophy almost thirty years later. Not that they have exactly the same meaning; they do not since no teacher can act like Socrates' *daimonion*. But it is important that Derrida does not abandon the reference to something outside the disciple's soul or mind, which seems to exceed both him and his master.

Indeed, the whole Derrida-Foucault polemic shows that Derrida appropriates not only the Socratic way of questioning but also the metaphysical understanding of reason whose structure grounds the tendency to transgress all historical situations. Foucault is therefore right to diagnose, years later, Derrida's criticism as the voice of a true metaphysician. The difference between both authors is clear in Derrida's puzzlement over Foucault's problematic and elliptical statement about "the Greek *logos*" having "no contrary" but faced only with the *hubris* which, in any case, came to us "enveloped in the reassuring dialectic of Socrates." It is the comment upon this statement that Derrida adds, in brackets, to the published text; and it is in this addendum that he insists that "the Greek *logos*" contained a permanent threat of self-division and that the "reassuring dialectics of Socrates" had its

divisive side connected to its effort at establishing the *proper* object of reason (Derrida 1978, 47–50).²³

In these pages, Derrida keeps wondering about Foucault's voice and about finding his own and preeminently Socratic tone, both personal and not. Whether Derrida succeeds in this enterprise is immaterial for the present purpose. What is important is that his Socratic inspiration, real or perhaps partly staged, reminds us of how exceedingly difficult it is to find a voice that would be *mine* and yet capable of conveying, through *this* quality, some universal truth. And this brings us back to Plato's Socrates, more exactly to his portrayal in the *Symposium*.

In "Plato's Pharmacy," the *Symposium* is not in the foreground but Derrida uses three passages from this dialogue to add further traits to his image of Socrates and his power. The first of these is Diotima's description of Eros at 203c–d, in which "one cannot fail to recognize the features of Socrates, as though Diotima, in looking at him, were proposing to Socrates the portrait of Socrates" (Derrida 1981, 117). Eros who "spends his life philosophizing" is a mirror image of Socrates' bewitching quality that accompanies his search for knowledge: Socrates, as read by Derrida, aims ceaselessly at this epistemic goal while disorienting the others who cannot figure him out. We find many descriptions of Socrates' "sorcery" in the dialogues, and the *Symposium* especially pays close attention to Socrates' ensnaring of his interlocutors. But, and this is the crucial lesson, the depiction of Socrates' charm culminates in Alcibiades' speech which ends up turning the whole picture inside out and showing that Socrates' sorcery consists, at the bottom, in arguments alone.

Alcibiades' account of how Socrates changed his perception of himself gains its full effect from the contrast between the visible and the invisible Socrates. Derrida's second quotation from the *Symposium* concerns the activity of the latter: it is at this point that Alcibiades admits that, when hearing Socrates, he is swept up in a vehement frenzy (Derrida 1981, 124). Derrida reproduces only one part of this admission, which merits a fuller quotation:

Still, I swear to you, the moment he starts to speak, I am beside myself: my heart starts leaping in my chest, the tears come streaming down my face, even the frenzied Corybantes seem sane compared to me—and, let me tell you, I am not alone. I have heard Pericles and many other great

23 I leave aside the detail of the polemics whose main focus is on Descartes; they are summarized in, e.g., Wood 2009, 48–59. On this polemics and its relation to Plato, see also Gaston 2007, 10–13.

orators, and I have admired their speeches. But nothing like this ever happened to me: they never upset me so deeply that my very own soul (*mou hê psuchê*) started protesting that my life—*my* life!—was no better than the most miserable slave's.

Pl. *Symp.* 215e1–6

Alcibiades is certain that he accounts for his own innermost feelings, but also for what must happen to everyone who hears Socrates speak. At this point, Alcibiades has already described Socrates' look by comparing him to a statue of Silenus with his flutes or pipes in his hands and a hollow interior "full of tiny statues of gods" (215b3). Yet instead of such statues, Socrates' interior contains nothing but speeches or arguments (*logoi*). Hence the comparison between these "bare speeches" and the airs played by the satyr Marsyas on his flute. Derrida's third quotation from the *Symposium* comes from this comparison which Alcibiades addresses to Socrates directly:

And you're quite a flute-player, aren't you? In fact, you're much more marvelous than Marsyas, who needed instruments to cast his spells on people. And so does anyone who plays his tunes today—for even the tunes Olympus played are Marsyas' work, since Olympus learned everything from him. Whether they are played by the greatest flautist or the meanest flute-girl, his melodies have in themselves the power to possess and so reveal those people who are ready for the god and his mysteries. That's because his melodies are themselves divine. The only difference between you and Marsyas is that you need no instruments; you do exactly what he does, but with bare words (*psilois logois*). You know, people hardly ever take a speaker seriously, even if he's the greatest orator; but let anyone—man, woman, or child—listen to you or even to a poor account of what you say—and we are all transported, completely possessed.

Symp. 215b8–d6

Socrates' speeches therefore retain their power in anyone's mouth. According to Alcibiades, their appeal is more universal than that of divine melodies: the latter inspire only those who are ready to be initiated, but Socrates' speech affects *everyone*, men, women, and children alike. This is certainly a strange claim, but, if we take it seriously, it can only mean that the Socratic way of questioning, besides aiming at a particular subject under discussion, penetrates to the rational core of what it means to be human, a core seated deeper than the usual depths of explicit self-reflection. Alcibiades therefore subverts the image of man suggested by the rites and mysteries, one where humanity wears

a thin veneer of cultivated rationality behind which the irrational powers keep their strength. Socratic speech suggests an inverse picture: under the layer of prejudice and ignorance, there is a power in every human being to be convinced by rational argumentation.

This rational core would therefore be what the Socratic voice reveals. As a consequence, Socratic conversation is independent of Socrates' physical presence, let alone of the Platonism which refashions Socrates and his death into a part of the system. Derrida states this with his usual overemphasis but still quite clearly:

The nakedness of the *pharmakon*, the blunt bare voice (*psilos logos*), carries with it a certain mastery in the dialogue, on the condition that Socrates overtly renounce its benefits: knowledge as power, passion, pleasure. On the condition, in a word, that he consent to die. The death of the body, at least: that is the price that must be paid for *alêtheia* and the *epistêmê*, which are also powers.

DERRIDA 1981, 120

Here Derrida himself integrates the "bare voice" into a larger panorama that extends from the animate writing in the soul as praised in the *Phaedrus* to the metaphysics of the thinking soul as implied in the *Phaedo*. Such an integration feeds both from the Socratic *elenchus*, which aims at specific targets, and from a broader project of knowledge which is universal in virtue of its own nature and definition. How to balance both is a question that runs through "Plato's Pharmacy" and other texts where Derrida reenacts what many suspect is a new version of the old theatrics of gaining power through renouncing power. On Derrida's account, not only is this what Plato's Socrates is already doing, but it is precisely Plato's reason for appropriating Socrates's voice in the first place. The Socratic "what is" question can after all be asked by anyone and its structure requires no dramatic context. But to apply this question meaningfully, a public discussion is needed, and indeed it seems to start even if one starts to talk to oneself. Derrida's sometimes overbearing arrogation of Socratic voice therefore marries its austere appeal to the ineluctable moment when it starts to say more than what is epistemically permissible. By the same token, it implies that Platonic or any other metaphysics is born, quite naturally, from the impossibility of some pure, self-sustaining interiority. This, I take it, is what the expression "philosophy in and beyond Socrates" ultimately means.²⁴

24 I would like to thank the editor of this volume, Christopher Moore, for inviting me to contribute and for his valuable comments and suggestions that improved the chapter.

Acknowledgments

My contribution was supported by the European Regional Development Fund-Project “Creativity and Adaptability as Conditions of the Success of Europe in an Interrelated World” (No. CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/16_019/0000734).

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Socrates, Vlastos, and Analytic Philosophy

David Conan Wolfsdorf

1 Introduction

Prior to World War II, the Anglo-Germanophone movement that came to be called “analytic philosophy”¹ was largely ahistorical. Its governing philosophical concerns lay in epistemology and methodology, in the philosophy of mathematics and logic, the philosophy of language, and the philosophy of science. Notwithstanding the importance and influence of intuitionism in the first decades of the twentieth century,² by the thirties noncognitivism had eclipsed cognitivism in ethics.³ Adherents of philosophical analysis by and large held that ethical utterances and thoughts are not truth-apt and thus that ethics is not a domain of knowledge. Illustrative statements by Wittgenstein, Carnap, and Russell follow:

My whole tendency and the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless. Ethics so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute valuable, can be no science. What it says does not add to our knowledge.⁴

WITTGENSTEIN 1965, 12

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- 1 On the use of the phrase, cf. G.H. von Wright: “It has struck me that the *name* ‘analytic philosophy,’ as far as I know became current relatively late in the history of the movement. It only gradually supplanted the label ‘logical positivism’ which lingered on longer after it had become obsolete. To the change in terminology contributed, I should think, significantly the works of Arthur Pap [1949]. The early Cambridge analysts and members of the Vienna Circle insisted on their method being (logical and conceptual) analysis. But they did not use the term ‘analytical philosophy’ for their new type of thinking” (von Wright 1993, n. 35). Cf. H.-J. Glock: “Pertinent uses of ‘analytic(al) philosophy’ came relatively late. One of the first occurs in Ernst Nagel [1936] ... But the name caught on only after the war” (Glock 2008a, 44).
 - 2 Most prominently, Moore 1903; Ross 1930, 1939; Prichard 1949 (published posthumously).
 - 3 On the history of this development, in particular the work of Stevenson, and its Germanophone and Anglophone roots, see Satris 1987.
 - 4 The lecture was originally delivered in late 1929 or early 1930.

In the domain of metaphysics, including the philosophy of value and normative theory, logical analysis yields the negative result that the alleged statements in this domain are entirely meaningless.⁵

CARNAP 1959 [1932], 60–1

Questions as to “values” lie wholly outside the domain of knowledge. That is to say when we say that this or that has “value,” we are giving expression to our own emotions, not to a fact which would still be true if our feelings were different.

RUSSELL 1935, 230–1

If analytic philosophy is so understood, then assuming Socrates was principally an ethical philosopher, indeed a cognitivist and a realist, it is hard to see how there could be any positive relation between analytic philosophy and Socrates.

If instead analytic philosophy is understood as a style of philosophy that came to dominate the Anglophone philosophical world in the second half of the twentieth century, above all in terms of its focus on philosophical arguments and its aspirations to clarity and rigor in thought and expression, then the availability of a positive relation between this and Socrates becomes more plausible. In certain contexts, such a broad use of “analytic philosophy” might threaten to be vacuous. But in the context of a history of the reception of Socrates since antiquity, it demarcates a movement tolerably well.⁶ Consequently, we will refer to those philosophical students of Socrates whose work conforms in spirit and style to mainstream analytic philosophy as “analytically oriented” philosophers of their subject.

The plausibility of a positive relation between Socrates and analytic philosophy so understood now crucially depends on how “Socrates” is handled. Assume “Socrates” is taken to refer to the historical Socrates. The historical Socrates wrote no philosophy. If there are no texts that contain Socrates’ philosophical arguments or at least Socrates’ philosophical theses or commitments, then again there can be no positive relation between analytic philosophy and Socrates.

5 It is noteworthy that Carnap’s position here is not representative of the Vienna Circle; on which cf. Satris 1987, 23.

6 Cf. J. Annas who uses “analytic philosophy” in this way in an expository context similar to mine: “It is arguable that by the late twentieth century analytical philosophy has become essentially characterized as a concern for precision and rigor in argument, less tied to particular assumptions about meaning and the role of science than earlier analytical philosophers” (2004, 41).

To this last problem there are two main responses. One is that there are texts that contain the historical Socrates' philosophy. Socrates of course did not compose these texts, but some of his successors did. Those analytically oriented philosophers who advocate this position more precisely endorse the view that Plato's early dialogues or at least a sizeable subset of them contain Socrates' philosophy. The sense in which these texts "contain" Socrates' philosophy is that the character Socrates portrayed within them is faithful to the historical Socrates; he raises the philosophical questions that the historical Socrates raised and pursues answers to these questions as the historical Socrates did.

The alternative response to the problem discards the assumption that "Socrates" in our title refers to the historical Socrates. Instead it assumes that "Socrates" refers only to the character Socrates in Plato's early dialogues. These dialogues are distinguished as objects of analytically oriented study in virtue of the fact that in them the character Socrates raises and pursues a distinctive set of philosophical questions and responses. The crucial difference between the advocates of the two distinct responses then is that the former engage the Socratic problem and answer it with the thesis that some of Plato's early dialogues contain the philosophy of the historical Socrates. The crucial common ground they share is that the character Socrates in Plato's early dialogues advances a distinctive philosophy worthy of studious attention.

2 The Burgeoning of Analytically Oriented Work on Plato's Early Dialogues

In the first sixty-five years of the twentieth-century there was very little work on Plato's early dialogues that one could well characterize as analytically oriented.⁷ Such work has emerged only in the last half century and burgeoned in the last thirty years.⁸ The explanation for this development has much to do with the career of Gregory Vlastos. Consider Thomas Brickhouse and Nicholas Smith's remarks in the preface to their 1994 book *Plato's Socrates*:

7 Robinson 1941 is the only book length treatment that I can think of that might satisfy this description. (Robinson taught in the Philosophy Department at Cornell University from 1928 to 1946 and so left Cornell just at the time Max Black and Norman Malcolm arrived there and the department became a leading center for analytic philosophy in the United States.)

8 Cf. Vlastos's remark: "Thirty years ago work on Socrates was a rarity in the scholarly literature in English. Today it is appearing in abundance. I feel privileged to have had a share in this greening of Socratic studies whose beginning can be dated to the sixties ..." (Vlastos 1991, 18–19).

Perhaps the most important quality of Vlastos's work is that it has provided grounds for treating the philosophy of the character Socrates in Plato's early dialogues as a serious special subject for investigation.

BRICKHOUSE AND SMITH 1994, viii

Vlastos was arguably the most influential student of Greek philosophy working in the United States in the second half of the twentieth century.⁹ His 1954 article "The 'Third Man' Argument in the *Parmenides*" is often described as the first paper to show that concerns related to traditional problems of analytic philosophy could be found in ancient philosophical texts and that the methods or style of analytic philosophy could be applied to the interpretation of aspects of these texts.¹⁰ Alexander Mourelatos's following remark nicely conveys the point:

What emerged in the revolutionary period of the mid-1950s was [a new paradigm for the study of ancient Greek philosophy]: the techniques of rigorous analysis and formal modeling that philosophers had applied ahistorically to the study of philosophical concepts and arguments came to be applied to the analysis of Greek philosophical texts. The techniques of ordinary-language analysis were correspondingly utilized to map the logic of ancient Greek usage. Given the common concern for linguistic analysis and for attention to textual detail, classicists and philosophers came to see their respective approaches as convergent and complementary.... [I]n North America the revolution had a single precipitating event and a single instigator: the publication [of Vlastos's *Parmenides* paper].¹¹

MOURELATOS 2015, 379

Compare Vlastos's own comments in the introduction to the 1970 collection of essays on Plato that he edited:

Much of this new zeal for Platonic studies has been generated by the importation of techniques of logical and semantic analysis that have proved productive in contemporary philosophy. By means of these techniques we may now better understand some of the problems Plato attempted to solve.

VLASTOS 1970

9 Kahn 1992, 234; Schofield 2002, 263.

10 Vlastos 1954, and Annas 2004, 30–3 on its historical context.

11 Cf. Leshner 2004, 90–2; Preus 2004, 81.

During the second of two tenures as chairman of the Philosophy Department at Princeton (1971–76), Vlastos founded the first joint Classics-Philosophy program in the United States. This in turn became a model for similar programs at Harvard, Pittsburgh, Cornell, Berkeley, and the University of Texas at Austin, in some of these cases through Vlastos's direct involvement. All of these programs have since become leaders in the study of ancient philosophy in the United States.¹²

At Princeton Vlastos worked with a number of students of ancient philosophy who have since become prominent in the profession such as Terry Irwin, Richard Kraut, Alexander Nehamas, and Paul Woodruff. In the eighties Vlastos led numerous celebrated National Endowment for the Humanities summer seminars on the philosophy of Socrates. A number of participants in these seminars, such as Brickhouse and Smith, Benson, Mark McPherran, and Roslyn Weiss, acknowledging their influence, have since made important contributions to the subject.¹³

Some of the broader historical and philosophical conditions that facilitated the development of analytically oriented ancient philosophical ethics and the philosophy of Socrates specifically may also be noted here. Among academics and more generally on college and university campuses, the broad social and political movements of the sixties and seventies in American culture (and elsewhere in the world) imbued philosophical ethics with a historical urgency.¹⁴ But the resurgence of ethics into mainstream analytic philosophy began earlier, in the late fifties, and had philosophical roots.¹⁵ Explaining this development itself would go well beyond the bounds of the present chapter. But among its precipitating factors were challenges to noncognitivism in ethics, pragmatist criticisms of the value neutrality of science and of rationality generally, as well as novel approaches to ethical objectivity.¹⁶

Of particular importance for work in ancient ethics were contributions such as Elizabeth Anscombe's 1958 paper "Modern Moral Philosophy," which encouraged a reorientation away from the dominant modern traditions of deontology and utilitarianism toward virtue ethics or ethics of character. Works of the seventies such as Peter Geach's *The Virtues* (1977) and Philippa

12 Mourelatos 2015, 380.

13 E.g., Benson 2000, Preface.

14 Cf. Glock 2008b, 98.

15 It is important to note that ethical theory and applied ethics had been marginalized only in mainstream analytic philosophy in the thirties and forties. Elsewhere in Anglophone philosophy both areas of ethics were widely studied and taught. Cf. Frankena 1964; Sloan 1979.

16 Cf. Darwall et al. 1992, 121–4, with relevant bibliography; Hurka 2011, 3–24.

Foot's *Virtues and Vices* (1978) further contributed to what has since become a renaissance of virtue ethics.¹⁷

One of Vlastos's central grounds for distinguishing the philosophy advanced in Plato's early dialogues from the philosophy advanced in the middle dialogues is his thesis that the ethics of the early dialogues do not depend on a commitment to the centerpiece of Plato's mature philosophy, transcendent Forms.¹⁸ Although metaphysics also returned to mainstream analytic philosophy in the seventies,¹⁹ the absence of metaphysical commitments to such entities as Platonic Forms made the ethics of the early Platonic dialogues much more palatable than the ethics of Plato's middle dialogues.

More recently and especially with the increased attention to the relation between empirical psychology and ethics, work in ethical or moral psychology has contributed to interest in ancient ethics generally and the ethics of Plato's Socrates specifically. Brickhouse and Smith's *Socratic Moral Psychology* is a signal contribution.²⁰ But topics in ethical psychology such as *akrasia* and desire for the good have been salient in the study of Plato's Socrates of the early dialogues since the seventies.²¹

Two further points are worth adding here pertaining to the relevance of and perennial interests in Socrates. One is the pride of place held by the historical Socrates as the alleged founder of Western philosophical ethics and of Plato's early dialogues as among the earliest works in the field. The other is the extraordinary personality and life of the historical Socrates or at least the character Socrates in Plato's early dialogues as a champion of philosophy and the philosophical life. This latter point finds expression in numerous analytically oriented contributions to the subject. For example, consider Gerasimos Santas's remarks on the "immense strength of Socrates' life" and on "a man with an endless passion for reason ... who had achieved a complete harmony between reason and passion, and between word and deed—a fantastic integration of life and thought":

Few subsequent philosophers have achieved this integration between philosophic thought and philosophic life ... Perhaps even fewer philosophers have considered such integration necessary ... It is certainly a

17 Cf. Gill 2004, 213.

18 Vlastos 1991, 48, 56–80.

19 On this, cf. Schwartz 2012, 204–38; Simons 2013.

20 Brickhouse and Smith 2010; cf. Brickhouse and Smith 2013, 185–209.

21 E.g., cf. Santas 1966; Gulley 1968; Vlastos 1969.

stroke of good fortune that the first great philosopher could inspire and teach as well as he could philosophize.²²

SANTAS 1979, 8–9

In sum, it was Vlastos's great enthusiasm for and advocacy of the subject, his compelling personality, as well as his philosophical and philological skills²³ and acumen that from about the seventies played a crucial role in the burgeoning of analytically oriented philosophy of Socrates or of Plato's early dialogues, particularly in the United States. This development was facilitated by broader trends in post-War analytic philosophy, in particular the resurgence of ethics into mainstream analytic philosophy as well as the growth of ancient philosophical studies generally. In the latter case special notice should also be taken of the founding in this period of the first Anglophone journals devoted to ancient philosophy: *Phronesis* (in 1955), *Apeiron* (1966), *Ancient Philosophy* (1980), and *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* (1983).²⁴ The emergence of these organs particularly enabled and encouraged focused studies on relatively narrow ancient philosophical problems and textual passages.

3 Vlastos's Socratic Dialogues

Vlastos's two principal publications on Plato's Socrates of the early dialogues are his 1991 *Socrates Ironist and Moral Philosopher* and his shorter posthumously published collection *Socratic Studies*.²⁵ Much of the content of both books is developed from earlier published and unpublished papers.²⁶ As Vlastos

22 Observe that Santas's book was published in The Arguments of the Philosophers series, which describes itself in this way: "The group of books of which this is one will include an essential analytic and critical account of each of the considerable number of the great and influential philosophers." Cf. also Santas's remark: "I have selected here for study what I consider to be Socrates' greatest contributions to philosophy. And even here I have concentrated on the topics in which I thought that I could make some progress, using contemporary techniques of analysis and scholarship, in understanding and assessing Socrates' contributions" (xii).

23 For a discussion of all three of these qualities, cf. Nehamas 1996.

24 To be precise, *Phronesis* was founded as a multilingual journal, but in fact almost all of the articles it has published have been in English.

25 Vlastos 1994.

26 Vlastos describes the history of his work on Socrates and Plato's early dialogues in the Introduction to the 1991 book. That history goes back to 1953 when Vlastos devoted a sabbatical to the subject. Between then and the mid seventies, he published an edition of Plato's *Protagoras* (1956), the edited collection *The Philosophy of Socrates* (1971), and five papers on aspects of Plato's early dialogues (Vlastos 1957–58, 1967, 1969, 1972, 1974).

describes in the Introduction to the 1991 book, it was the influence of Terry Irwin's 1977 (generally very well received) book *Plato's Moral Theory*, the first half of which is devoted to the ethics of the early dialogues, that "proved one of the outstanding learning experiences of my life" and "did more to invigorate and deepen my understanding of its topic than anything I had yet read."²⁷ From about this time until his death in 1991, Vlastos's research and writing principally focused on the philosophy of Socrates as presented in Plato's early dialogues.

The distinction of a set of Platonic dialogues as early and the view that the historical Socrates heavily influenced the philosophy of these texts is certainly not proprietary to Vlastos or to the analytically oriented philosophers of the subject. Developmentalism, the thesis that the philosophical content of Plato's dialogues exhibits development over the course of Plato's career, was first advanced at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The most influential early formulation was in Karl Friederich Hermann's 1839 *Geschichte und System der platonischen Philosophie*. Developmentalism was further encouraged by stylometric studies, which were first applied to the investigation of the chronology of Plato's texts toward the end of the nineteenth century.²⁸ Among developmentalists, since the mid-nineteenth century the earliest period in Plato's philosophical development has widely been referred to as "Socratic." The term was originally Hermann's. Compare C. Köstlin, who in his 1859 *Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie* writes that "in der ersten Periode ist Platon noch gänzlich Sokratiker";²⁹ and Hermann's most prominent student F. Susemihl who in his 1855–60 *Die genetische Entwicklung der platonischen Philosophie* maintains that in his first period Plato rejected all other philosophical systems for Socrates'.³⁰

Concurrently, in the course of the nineteenth century Plato's early dialogues came to replace Xenophon's Socratic writings as the source of the historical Socrates' philosophy, thereby reversing scholarly consensus that had prevailed prior to the nineteenth century.³¹ Consequently, the view for which Vlastos argues in chapter three of his 1991 book ("The Evidence of Aristotle and Xenophon"), namely that Aristotle's testimony corroborates the thesis that Plato's early dialogues exhibit the philosophy of the historical Socrates and

27 Vlastos 1991, 6. Note that Vlastos had been the supervisor of Irwin's dissertation on the topic at Princeton (defended in 1973; cf. Appendix 1). Vlastos reviewed Irwin's book in a 1978 edition of the *Times Literary Supplement*, and a series of exchanges between Vlastos and Irwin were printed in the magazine in the course of the year, from March to September (7, n. 30).

28 Cf. Brandwood 1994, 90–7.

29 Köstlin 1859, 125.

30 These remarks are based on Wolfsdorf 1997, 8–9.

31 Cf. Dorion and Bandini 2000, viii–xii; Dorion 2010, 2–6.

that Xenophon's Socratic writings do not, culminates a more than 150 year tradition of modern scholarship.³²

On the other hand, among interpreters who endorse this view, exactly which dialogues constitute the early Socratic period, that is, which early Platonic dialogues contain the philosophy of Socrates, varies.³³ For example, two of the most prominent Anglophone interpreters of Plato of the first half of the twentieth century, John Burnet and A.E. Taylor, advocate the view that Plato's Socrates is the historical Socrates.³⁴ But in advancing this claim, they treat the middle as well as early dialogues as Socratic. Today, analytically oriented philosophers of Plato's early dialogues typically regard the following texts, in alphabetic order, as Socratic: *Apology*, *Charmides*, *Crito*, *Euthydemus*, *Euthyphro*, *Gorgias*, *Hippias Major*, *Hippias Minor*, *Ion*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Meno* (excluding the epistemological portion of this text from 80a), *Protagoras*, and *Republic* Book 1.

Vlastos's view of Plato's Socratic dialogues is more restricted. In particular, it excludes aspects of *Gorgias*, *Lysis*, *Euthydemus*, and *Hippias Major*. The basic reason for this is that Vlastos maintains that in these four texts, as in the later portion of *Meno*, Plato develops ideas that transcend the philosophy of the other early dialogues. Accordingly, Vlastos distinguishes two subsets of early Platonic dialogues: an earlier and a later group.³⁵

The key reason for the distinction owes to the most influential of Vlastos's contributions, his account of Socrates' philosophical method. In the first volume of *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* (1983), Vlastos published his seminal paper, "The Socratic Elenchus." There he defines Socratic *elenchus* as "a search for moral truth by adversary argument in which a thesis is debated only if asserted as the answerer's own belief and is regarded as refuted only if the negation of his thesis is deduced from his beliefs."³⁶ According to this description, Socrates' philosophical method operates as follows. Socrates elicits a thesis *t* from his interlocutor. Socrates then secures the interlocutor's agreement to a premise set *P* that includes one or more premises *q*, *r*, etc. relevant to *t*. Socrates argues and the interlocutor agrees that *P* entails not-*t*. And Socrates concludes that not-*t* has been proven true; in other words *t* is false.³⁷

32 Vlastos himself does not acknowledge this fact.

33 Cf. Dorion 2010, 6–7, 17–18. Cf. Thesleff 1982, 15–17.

34 Burnet 1911, 1916; Taylor 1933. Cf. Miller 1953.

35 Cf. Irwin 1977, 6–9.

36 Vlastos 1983, 30.

37 More precisely, this is an abbreviated description of what Vlastos calls "standard elenchus" (Vlastos 1994, 11). He acknowledges that Socrates also, albeit infrequently, employs a method that he calls "indirect elenchus" (11 n. 35).

For our purposes, three aspects of this account of Socrates' philosophical method are important. One is that Socrates is strictly a moral philosopher.³⁸ This is a central thesis that Vlastos advances in his 1991 book *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher* as distinguishing the philosophy of Socrates and the early Socratic dialogues from the philosophy of Plato's middle dialogues. In contrast, the character Socrates in Plato's middle dialogues is also a metaphysician committed to a theory of transcendent Forms, an epistemologist heavily influenced by mathematics as well as his metaphysical commitments, a psychologist committed to the tripartition and immortality of the soul, and a political philosopher with an elaborate theory of the ideal state.³⁹

A second aspect of Vlastos's account of Socratic *elenchus* relates to Socrates' disavowal of ethical knowledge. More precisely, according to Vlastos, Socrates disavows ethical knowledge_C, where the addition of the subscript "C" here serves to denote knowledge that is certain and infallible. This is contrasted with so-called knowledge_E, which is to say fallible and uncertain knowledge that has up to this point survived elenctic ("E") testing.⁴⁰ Socrates has ethical knowledge_E, Vlastos maintains. But since ethical knowledge_E is uncertain and fallible, Socrates must continue to subject it to the *elenchus*; and he does this precisely by engaging any and all willing interlocutors, among other reasons, to discover whether their commitments might unsettle his own.

The third aspect of Vlastos's account of Socratic *elenchus* is in fact the one that has garnered the most attention.⁴¹ P and *t* are inconsistent. So *t* or at least one member of P must be false. But this does not entail that *t* is false. So there is a puzzle as to how Socrates can employ the *elenchus* to conclude not-*t*. Vlastos calls this "the problem of the *elenchus*."

For our immediate purposes, the key point relates to how Vlastos views Socrates' *elenchus* in terms of Plato's philosophical development. In the earlier early Platonic dialogues, namely those that contain the philosophy of the historical Socrates, the grounds for inferring not-*t* are simply that Socrates and his interlocutor are more strongly committed to the premises of P than to *t*. However, Vlastos maintains that by the time he composes *Gorgias* Plato has come to his own, alternative understanding of how the problem of the *elenchus* may be solved. This involves the attribution to the character Socrates in the *Gorgias* of the following ideas. If the interlocutor chose to reject some

38 Vlastos uses "moral" as equivalent to "ethical" (see Vlastos 1994, 6–7). This is not a usage I endorse, but will employ it here in describing his position.

39 Cf. Vlastos's "Ten Theses" at Vlastos 1991, 45–80, esp. 47–9.

40 The existence of cognitive states that are fallible but epistemic seems dubious to me.

41 For a detailed history of the reception of Vlastos's paper, cf. Wolfsdorf 2013.

premise of *P* rather than *t*, Socrates would have the resources to show his interlocutor that *t* conflicts with some other of his interlocutor's beliefs. This is because Socrates in the *Gorgias* is committed to the following two principles:

- (A) Anyone who ever has a false moral belief will always have at the same time true beliefs entailing the negation of that belief.
- (B) Socrates himself has a consistent set of moral beliefs.

The conjunction of (A) and (B) entails that:

- (C) Socrates' set of moral beliefs consists exclusively of true beliefs.⁴²

Consequently, Socrates can employ his commitment to (C) to ensure that *P* rather than *t* is true.

Finally, in the post-*Gorgias* early dialogues—again *Lysis*, *Euthydemus*, and *Hippias Major*—there is, Vlastos maintains, a “demise of the elenchus.” In other words, Socrates' method of philosophical investigation is not limited to testing his interlocutors' theses. Instead, Vlastos claims, “the theses that are seriously debated in these dialogues are uncontested by the interlocutor.”⁴³

In sum, Vlastos's view that a subset of Plato's early dialogues contains the philosophy of the historical Socrates is crucially based on Vlastos's view of the character Socrates' philosophical method, the *elenchus*, which is in turn related to a set of theses about the character Socrates' interests and commitments, saliently including his exclusive focus on moral philosophy and his disavowal of moral knowledge_C.

4 Socratic Studies after Vlastos

Interest in the problem of the elenchus and more broadly in Socrates' method of pursuing ethical knowledge conforms to one of the defining features of analytic philosophy, concern with argumentation. The epistemology pertinent to Socrates' avowals and disavowals of knowledge is closely related to this defining feature. Beyond these topics the central contribution of Vlastos, his contemporaries, and heirs has been the identification or precisification and intense scrutiny of a number of topics and problems definitive of the philosophy of Socrates in Plato's early dialogues.

⁴² Vlastos 1983, 52–5.

⁴³ Vlastos 1994, 30.

Loosely speaking, a number of these topics fall within domains familiar to mainstream analytic philosophy: ethics, ethical epistemology, ethical psychology, and metaphysics. Others are more idiosyncratic and proprietary to the life of Socrates or at least Plato's Socrates. Salient among the former are the relation between virtue (*aretê*)⁴⁴ and knowledge, the relation between virtue or knowledge and *eudaimonia*, the relation between the putative parts of virtue, the relation between definitional and non-definitional ethical knowledge, the nature of desire for the good, and the nature and motivational role of irrational desire. Salient among the latter are Socratic irony; Socrates' political views, in particular his opinions of Athenian democracy and civil disobedience; and topics relating to Socrates' religious commitments, in particular his opinions regarding popular Athenian religion, his understanding of his divine sign (*daimonion*), and his view of his trial for impiety. It would be illuminating to canvass treatments of each of these topics within the analytically oriented literature and beyond that to trace the relations between the analytic contributions and the pre-analytic Anglophone and European literature of the twentieth and nineteenth centuries. The scope and demands of that undertaking go well beyond the limits of this chapter.⁴⁵ Here I make some very general remarks on the analytic treatments.

First, while Vlastos's work has been crucial in defining and spurring on a research program, the details of his own results are, as often as not, contested. For example, most analytically oriented philosophers of Plato's early dialogues do not accept Vlastos's solution to the problem of the *elenchus*, his division of these texts into elenctic and post-elenctic, or his division of knowledge_C and knowledge_E.

Second, most of the analytically oriented work, including Vlastos's, has been historically reconstructive. That is to say, its aim has been to present, as accurately as possible based on the evidence of the dialogues, the philosophical commitments of the character Socrates in these texts (whether or not these commitments are also identified as those of the historical Socrates). Contrast this with alternatives such as rational reconstruction or historical reconstruction complemented by evaluation of the ahistorical philosophical merit of the position reconstructed. As such, much of the work of the analytically oriented philosophers may be characterized as for the most part history of philosophy in a relatively historical as opposed to philosophical mode.

44 I prefer the translation "excellence" for *aretê*, but use "virtue" here on the grounds of its familiarity in this context.

45 Overviews of the analytically oriented literature pertaining to most of these topics can be found in Bussanich and Smith 2013.

Third, only some of the topics that are definitive of the philosophy of (Plato's) Socrates are the explicit subject of arguments that Socrates develops in the early dialogues. For example, the relation between knowledge and *eudaimonia* is the subject of an argument in *Euthydemus* (278e–281e); the relation between the virtues is the subject of a series of arguments in *Protagoras* (329 *ad finem*); and the claim that everyone desires the good is the subject of an argument in *Meno* (77b–78b). Other topics are not the subject of arguments that Socrates pursues. Rather, interpretations of Socrates' commitments regarding the given topic are determined on the basis of disparate claims he makes throughout the early dialogues or at least a subset of them.⁴⁶ For example, this is the case with Socrates' view of the relation between definitional and non-definitional ethical knowledge and with his ethical epistemological commitments, given his disavowals and occasional avowals of ethical knowledge.

I underscore that in this latter sort of case, insofar as the interpreter is not attempting to interpret an argument, what distinguishes such treatment as analytically oriented must be something like the following combination of characteristics: the content of the topic under investigation, the degree of explicit assembly and scrutiny of textual evidence in support of the thesis advanced regarding the topic, and the aspiration to clarity and rigor in advancing the thesis on the basis of the textual evidence assembled and scrutinized. Arguably, the second and third characteristics here are simply virtues of academic or intellectual inquiry and presentation in any domain. If that is so, then in many cases it should be difficult to distinguish analytically oriented interpretation from what we might simply call responsible ancient philosophical scholarship on Plato's early dialogues. Some corroboration of this point may be derived from Christopher Gill's remarks concerning contemporary Anglophone work in ancient philosophy generally:

Much of the most innovative work [in ancient philosophy] in English-language scholarship has tried to combine the more philosophically informed techniques of the analytic approach with greater attention to the history of philosophy or to questions of literary form and genre. The range of areas of ancient philosophy studied in this way in recent years has increased greatly ... With certain exceptions, I am not sure that it is any longer accurate to speak of a distinctively "analytic" movement in English-language scholarship on ancient philosophy.

GILL 2004, 211

46 I underscore that such interpretation depends on the assumption that views Socrates expresses in various dialogues are coherent.

On the other hand, Gill acknowledges “certain exceptions” to this point, and it is noteworthy that with regard to these exceptions he singles out the following:

Study of the philosophy of “Socrates” (taken to mean a subsection of Plato’s early dialogues)⁴⁷ in the USA still tends to be couched in a rather rigidly analytic mode strongly influenced by Vlastos’s later work.

GILL 2004, 211 n. 9

Hence, despite the close relation between rigorous contemporary scholarship on Plato’s early dialogues and analytically oriented philosophy of Plato’s early dialogues, it remains reasonable to distinguish within mainstream Anglophone philosophy of the last half-century or so a body of analytically oriented work. In further considering what distinguishes this work, it will be helpful to discuss some topics and problems associated with Plato’s early dialogues that analytically oriented contributors by and large tend not to engage.

5 Limits in the Analytically Oriented Philosophy of Plato’s Early Dialogues

A number of dialogues in the Platonic corpus have contents that might qualify them as early, but these texts are often treated as spurious. *Alcibiades* and *Theages* are notable examples.⁴⁸ Analytically oriented philosophers of Plato’s early dialogues have largely steered clear of questions of authorship in these

47 The phrase “philosophy of Socrates” has been and continues to be used ambiguously. In its earliest occurrences (Miller 1953, Gulley 1968) it was used to refer to the philosophy of the historical Socrates, whether or not that philosophy was based solely on Plato’s early dialogues; in fact for both Miller and Gulley it was not. But the phrase is often used to refer to the philosophy of the character Socrates in Plato’s early dialogues, without the additional commitment to that philosophy being the philosophy of the historical Socrates. For example in his 1971 edited collection *The Philosophy of Socrates*, Vlastos writes: “Socrates of this book is the Platonic Socrates, or, to be more precise, the Socrates of Plato’s early dialogues” (1). Compare the 1992 collection edited by Hugh Benson entitled *Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates*. All of the contributions in Benson’s volume focus on Plato’s early dialogues. But not all of the contributors maintain that these works contain the philosophy of the historical Socrates. In his own 2000 book on the epistemology of Plato’s early dialogues, *Socratic Wisdom*, Benson explicitly restricts his interpretation to the philosophical content of the texts and resists a judgment on the Socratic problem.

48 Recent defenses of the authenticity of these texts can be found in Denyer 2001, 14–25, and Joyal 2000, 121–34. It is perhaps noteworthy that both of these scholars work in Classics departments.

and other cases.⁴⁹ Instead, they have assumed as their evidential base the dialogues widely acknowledged to be authentic and early.

In the last twenty or so years, especially since the publication of Gabriele Giannantoni's *Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquiae*,⁵⁰ increasing work has been done on Socratics contemporaneous with Plato, particularly Antisthenes, Aristippus, and Xenophon.⁵¹ Here too analytically oriented philosophy of Plato's early dialogues has largely remained focused on Plato's texts.

As we have seen, analytically oriented philosophy of Plato's early dialogues has more precisely focused on certain aspects of these texts: the philosophical arguments and commitments of the character Socrates. This focus tends to exclude or at least marginalize other aspects of the texts. Among these are historical aspects. In speaking of the historical aspects of the texts, I have in mind both the fact that the texts represent historical people and places and refer or allude to historical events and the fact that the philosophical contents of the texts themselves may be studied in various historical terms. For example, in this latter case, one might examine the philosophical content in relation to the contributions of other Socratics or in relation non-Socratic ethical philosophical works of the late fifth or early fourth century such as the *Dissoi Logoi* or *Anonymus Iamblichi*. Alternatively, one might examine it in relation to popular Athenian or Greek values or ideas.

Another aspect of Plato's early dialogues marginalized in the analytically oriented philosophy is their drama. One feature fundamental to the drama of the texts is that they are dialogues. So marginalization of the drama of the texts tends to marginalize their dialogicity. To some degree a conception of the *elenchus* such as Vlastos's engages the dialogical character of the texts. As we have seen, on Vlastos's view it is Socrates' interlocutors who provide the theses that Socrates targets for refutation and Socrates' interlocutors who provide or at least agree to the premise sets that Socrates employs in refuting the targeted theses. Whether this is in fact always or even commonly the way arguments Socrates initiates are conducted is contestable.⁵² But assuming Vlastos's account for the sake of illustration, since Socrates is supposed to be responsive to his interlocutors, understanding the interlocutors' contributions must shed light on Socrates' own contributions. More broadly, understanding the relations between Socrates' and his interlocutors' commitments and contributions is

49 Paul Woodruff's 1982 argument for the authenticity of *Hippias Major* is a noteworthy exception.

50 Giannantoni 1990.

51 E.g., cf. Hobden and Tuplin 2012; Boys-Stones and Rowe 2013; Zilioli 2015; Lampe 2015; Prince 2015; Flower 2016.

52 E.g., cf. Wolfsdorf 2003.

necessary for understanding how the dialogues as a whole are structured and operate. Marginalization of the dialogicity of the texts therefore obscures the broader structures and aims of the texts.⁵³

Furthermore the characters that participate in the arguments in Plato's early dialogues have relatively well-rounded personalities and again historical identities. Consequently, while argumentation is indeed central to the texts, there is more to understanding the arguments than grasping their bare propositional contents and the logical or conceptual relations obtaining between them. The psychological complexity of the characters also introduces a special set of problems for the interpretation of the arguments. Broadly speaking, these problems fall under the rubric of pragmatics. The fundamental pragmatic problem is that in any given argumentative passage it is questionable what Socrates' and his interlocutor's motivations are. But to make sense of the argument at issue, the interpreter must take a stand on these questions.

The problem of Socratic irony here looms large. As we noted above, this is a topic that analytically oriented philosophers have examined. In fact, Vlastos devotes the opening chapter of *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher* to it.⁵⁴ But it is noteworthy that interpretation of Socratic irony requires attention to features of the texts other than their philosophical arguments narrowly construed. Consequently, there may in principle be a tension between analytically oriented focus on Socrates' philosophy and on these other aspects of the texts.

Finally, it is questionable whether an understanding of the psychological attitudes of the characters in the dialogues can be insulated from an interpreter's views regarding Plato's interests in portraying the characters as such and in composing a given dialogue or the dialogues in general. For example, in principle Plato might put even a thoroughly sincere Socrates and his interlocutor to any number of uses within a passage or text.⁵⁵ One striking

53 In addition, Socrates is not the only character who initiates arguments in Plato's early dialogues. A signal example is Protagoras' Great Speech in *Protagoras*. Another is the series of arguments that Euthydemus and Dionysodorus develop in *Euthydemus*. So here again understanding Socrates' contributions and the texts as wholes requires consideration of the philosophical contributions of other characters.

54 A central component of Vlastos's view is that when Socrates participates in arguments, he is sincere and adheres to the "say what you believe" constraint that he places on his interlocutors (Vlastos 1983, 35). For a recent survey of alternative interpretations of Socratic irony, cf. Vasiliou 2013.

55 Observe that Vlastos explicitly commits himself to "grand hypothesis" that the character Socrates is Plato's mouthpiece: "In my previous book [*Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher*] I blocked out the hypothesis on which my whole interpretation of Plato's

illustration of this point relates to the fact that most but not all of the discussions in Plato's early dialogues conclude in *aporia*. How is this fact to be explained? It cannot be explained on the grounds that Socrates lacks knowledge of the answer to the questions that he pursues, since again some of the early dialogues do not end in *aporia*. Possibly, Socrates is more deeply perplexed about some questions than others. But this is not the only reasonable explanation.⁵⁶ By and large analytically oriented philosophers have been silent on the topic of the aporetic and non-aporetic conclusions of the early dialogues.

6 Conclusion

It has now been a quarter century since Vlastos's death. The principal value of the analytically oriented study of Plato's early dialogues that he above all inspired has been to draw attention to a set of philosophical problems and commitments in these texts and to examine this content with a degree of rigor and clarity that it has not received since antiquity, arguably ever. In the title of the preceding subsection, I spoke of the limits in analytically oriented philosophy of Plato's early dialogues. I did not intend to use "limits" in a blanketly critical way. Every form or style of interpretation or textual engagement must be limited in various ways. As I said, specifying those features of the texts and those considerations relating to them that the analytically oriented philosophers tend to avoid or marginalize further helps to define their contribution. In discussing these features, I have, however, also drawn attention to the way certain limits might jeopardize or problematize the interpretation of those very aspects of the texts with which the analytically oriented philosophers are concerned: the character Socrates' arguments and philosophical commitments.

dialogues depend: Plato makes Socrates say in any given dialogue 'whatever *he*—Plato—thinks *at the time of writing* would be the most reasonable thing for Socrates to be saying just then in expounding and defending his own philosophy'" (Vlastos 1994, 125; originally at 1991, 50). But even if this extraordinary hypothesis were true, it would not settle the question of Plato's interests in crafting and disseminating the dramatic dialogues as he did.

⁵⁶ For an alternative, cf. Wolfsdorf 2008, 197–209.

Appendix 1: Doctoral Dissertations Supervised at Princeton University⁵⁷

- Brown, J.H., *Theory of Logic in Bradley and Bosanquet*, 1955
 Shehadi, F.A., *Concept of Mystical Union in Al-Ghazali*, 1959
 Sykes, R.H., *The Doctrine of Substance in the Logical Works of Aristotle*, 1959
 Donnell, F.H. Jr., *Thinking and Imagination*, 1960
 Malcolm, J.F., *Plato's Conception of Moral Knowledge*, 1961
 Lee, E.N., *Plato's Theory of Meaning*, 1964
 Sartorius, R., *The Judicial Decision: Philosophical Perspectives*, 1965
 Wilkins, B.T., *John Locke and Edmund Burke on Human Rights*, 1965
 Chase, Alston S., *The Formal Approach: Prolegomenon to a Theory of Justice*, Oct 1967
 Pohle, William B., *Studies in the Physical Theory of Plato's Timaeus*, Jan 1969
 Waterfall, Donald E., *Plato and Aristotle on Akrasia*, Oct 1969
 Kraut, Richard H., *Two Studies in Classical Greek Moral Philosophy*, Oct 1969
 Kachi, Yukio, *Language and Reality in Plato's Theory of Characters*, Jan 1970
 Nehamas, Alexander, *Predication and the Theory of Forms in the Phaedo*, Oct 1971
 Irwin, Terence, *Theories of Virtue and Knowledge in Plato's Early and Middle Dialogues*, Jan 1973
 Woodruff, Paul, *Two Studies in Socratic Dialectic: The Euthyphro and the Hippias Major*, Oct 1973
 Hare, John Edmund, *Aristotle's Theory of Essence*, Oct 1975

Appendix 2: NEH Summer Seminars Directed

The Moral and Social Philosophy of Socrates and Plato (FF-10310-74),⁵⁸ 1974⁵⁹

- 57 I present the following information precisely as it was given in the database I received from the Philosophy Department at Princeton University. For example, the titles of the first two dissertations listed seem to need definite articles. In all instances, Vlastos is listed as the first adviser on the dissertation. He is listed as second adviser on only the following dissertation: Albritton, Rogers, *A Study of Plato's Philebus*, 1955. Thanks to Josephine Kelly, Graduate Program Administrator, for assistance with the data. Despite repeated requests, I was unfortunately unable to get a list of doctoral dissertations that Vlastos supervised while at the University of California, Berkeley.
- 58 The contents in parentheses are the NEH application/award numbers. Further information about these applications/awards can be found at: <https://securegrants.neh.gov/PublicQuery/Main.aspx>.
- 59 The NEH database supplies so-called council dates for the applications/awards. These are the dates on which the NEH committee determines the award for the application, not the dates on which the seminars are conducted. For instance, the council date for the last

The Moral and Social Philosophy of Socrates and Plato (FS-10280-76), 1976
 The Philosophy of Socrates (FS-10698-77), 1978
 The Philosophy of Socrates (FS-*0066-81), 1981
 The Philosophy of Socrates (FS-20934083), 1983
 The Philosophy of Socrates (FS-21751-88), 1988
 The Philosophy of Socrates (FS-22154-90), 1990⁶⁰

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application/award is August 1989. I have dated the seminars to the summer following the award date. Thanks to Richard Pettit, Program Analyst at the NEH, for assistance with the data.

- 60 Vlastos received one additional award from the NEH (FA-10774-74) in February 1974. This award appears to be for independent research on Plato's social philosophy. Mr. Pettit was unable to confirm that the award was for this purpose. However, two considerations support the claim. One is the amount of the award, which is significantly less than the amounts awarded for seminars. The other is the claim on the website of Princeton University's Philosophy Department that Vlastos conducted seven NEH summer seminars: <https://philosophy.princeton.edu/about/past-faculty/gregory-vlastos>.

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